THE CAPTAIN'S BARGAIN

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"THE CAPTAIN SAID NOTHING, BUT HIS UPLIFTED HAND FELL GENTLY UPON ROBBIE'S CURLY HEAD."—PAGE 40.

THE

CAPTAIN'S BARGAIN.

BY

JULIA McNAIR WRIGHT,

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF RASMUS, OR THE MAKING OF A MAN"; "A MADE MAN"; "THE DRAGON AND THE TEA-KETTLE"; "HANNAH, ONE OF THE STRONG WOMEN"; "FIREBRANDS"; "NOTHING TO DRINK"; "LIFE CRUISE OF CAPTAIN BESS ADAMS"; "THE BEST FELLOW IN THE WORLD," ETC., ETC.

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PREFACE.

A NUMBER of months ago, reading a French book by an author whose works are sometimes greatly good, and sometimes—quite the reverse, I remarked in the narrative a happy turn which I thought might be advantageously applied in a Temperance Story. The French sketch was a Paris romance, not of Temperance, but among its pleasant chords was one whereon, as to a key-note, I set this history of THE CAPTAIN'S BARGAIN.

The French tale will be no poorer, and mine may have a more ample variation, for that tonic caught drifting across the sea.

JULIA MCNAIR WRIGHT.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

THE CAPTAIN'S INDISCRETION, ... 7

CHAPTER II.

TO GO, OR NOT TO GO? 23

CHAPTER III.

THE CAPTAIN'S BARGAIN, ... 39

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUMMER SUN SHINES, ... 55

CHAPTER V.

THE ADVANTAGES OF LIVING WITH A PHILOSOPHER, 71

CHAPTER VI.

THE SUPERINTENDENT, ... 86

CHAPTER VII.

THE SCHOOLMASTER, ... 101

CHAPTER VIII.

"MR. MURRAY MAKES AN OFFER," 122

CHAPTER IX.

ROBERT COMES TO THE RESCUE, ... 139

CHAPTER X.

PAGE

ROBERT PROVES HIMSELF A HERO, ... 156

CHAPTER XI.

THE WOMAN WHO WENT ON A LONG JOURNEY, . . 172

CHAPTER XII.

VI ET ARMIS, ... 190

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. MURRAY BUILDS CARD-HOUSES, ... 207

CHAPTER XIV.

"THE MAKING OF A YOUNG GENTLEMAN," . . . 223

CHAPTER XV.

"A TOKEN OF MY TRUE LOVE," 240

CHAPTER XVI.

MASTERS AND GOVERNORS, ... 257

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. MURRAY'S CARD-HOUSES TUMBLE DOWN, . . 275

CHAPTER XVIII.

BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH, ... 292

CHAPTER XIX.

JUNE SUNSHINE, ... 309

CHAPTER XX.

MR. MURRAY BUILDS BETTER HOUSES, . . . 325

THE CAPTAIN'S BARGAIN.

CHAPTER I.

THE CAPTAIN'S INDISCRETION.

"ANOTHER glass, Captain?"

"No, not another, thank you, Mr. Combe."

"What, not another? Isn't the liquor good? Shall I mix you a julep now, or something hot, with lemon, eh?"

"No—no more," said Captain Allen, eying the tall bottle with desire. "The fact is, Mr. Combe, I promised my wife—and she is a woman-with-a-head-on-her-shoulders — that I wouldn't touch above one glass before I sold that lumber; and what 'Zekiel Allen says he sticks to, sure."

"Oh, but seems to me Mrs. Allen may be drawing the reins rather tight—eh, Captain?"

"None too tight, after all," said the Captain with a laugh. "She knows that if I had over one glass, I'd as like as not give the lumber

away, or sell it for less than the trees cost me standing. I'm free, Mr. Combe, very free, after two glasses."

If one might read the little drop of Mr. Combe's shoulders and of the corners of his mouth, possibly he had known that little peculiarity in Captain Allen, and had considered a few glasses of Old Rye a good investment as he bargained with him. But now Captain Allen, having refreshed his mind with his promise to his "'Liza," said briskly: "And so, Mr. Combe, will you have the lumber or shall I go round to Jenkins before train-time?"

"Oh, I'll have the lumber," said Mr. Combe, knowing that Jenkins, the rival builder, was now out on the street looking for the Captain.

"At the price laid down there?" said the Captain, pushing a long bill of various items toward Mr. Combe. "No beating down. You take it all?"

"Yes," said Mr. Combe. "Delivered at once."

"I'll begin sending it down to-morrow by six," said the Captain joyfully, now feeling the exhilaration of the builder's grog; "or at five, or at four, if you say so. Come up at three in the morning if you like."

"Pshaw! I can't get there before the train,

Captain," said Mr. Combe; and, with the fear of Jenkins before his eyes, he wrote at the bottom of the long lumber bill, "Bought by Sam'l Combe." "There now!"

"All right," said the Captain, folding the document and putting it into his pocket. "And now I will have another glass."

Mr. Combe poured out a second glass and put sugar therein. Then he prudently locked up the bottle in the closet. Why waste Jamaica when the bargain was made?

As Captain Allen sipped his liquor with evident keen relish, Mr. Combe said:

"Since your wife is so sharp about getting a promise as to how many glasses you will take, I wonder she does not try to make you swear off altogether."

"She does—she does," said the Captain, shaking his big head. "But, you see, I won't do it. I know too well what it would cost me. Whatever 'Zekiel Allen promises that he sticks to, if it kills him. Ask the county, they'll say Captain Allen is a man of his word. And I won't give my word for tee-total, because I like a good glass now and then first-rate. There; I'm sorry that one's finished—not that I am or ever mean to be a drunkard. I think too much of 'Liza and the children for that. It's on their

account I made the promise about not drinking over one glass before the bargain is finished. But I'll not swear total abstainer. Oh, no! And, Mr. Combe, if you like, you can bring up the rest of that bottle to-morrow, and we'll drink to our good luck when the last of the sticks are sent off."

Combe laughed. "All right; perhaps after a glass or two you'll throw me in an odd hundred or so of scantling."

"You needn't build on that," said the Captain honestly; "for 'Liza'll be there. Oh, she is a woman for trade! She made out that bill. She measures all the lumber. She used to be a school-ma'am. Oh, she is a woman-with-a-head! I don't know just how she does it, Mr. Combe. I never could measure lumber myself; but she—she just runs the rule here and there, and then—then she multiplies! Or is it that she divides? No; she—she adds! I vow I can't tell which it is—but she gets it right!"

Mr. Combe laughed again as he opened the door. The Jamaica was telling on the Captain, but too late to do his entertainer any good.

Captain Allen was very easily affected by liquor. His intoxication was always speedy, brief, and of three stages. He was in the first stage now—the stage of exhilaration. In that

stage it would be very hard to persuade the Captain that he had not a million or its equivalents in either pocket. It would be equally hard to persuade him that it was not his mission to lavish of his abundance on all his fellows. Given two glasses, Captain Allen was a new Don Quixote; every broken-down steed was to him a full-blooded charger; every windmill a giant; every village maid a Dulcinea to be defended. He was now in what the French call the state *glorieux;* he forgot that he trod the earth, and he marched with his head in the clouds. Had not his poverty and the prudence of 'Liza combined to keep his pockets empty, Captain Allen would have scattered his earnings right and left in such phases of feeling as the present.

Now he took the road to the railroad station. About him, in the waning light of the early April afternoon, were the skeletons or half-covered frames of various houses rising under the supervision of Combe or the rival Jenkins. For this little town of Lacy was coming up on a sudden boom. These houses which the workmen were leaving for the night, aided the glowing fantasies of Captain Allen's brain. "If they'd only build a thousand houses, and I could get out the lumber for all of them—ha! ha!

I'd be rich as Jay Gould in no time. Ho! ho! I'm no fool! What will 'Liza say when she sees this!" and he slapped the pocket where the bill of lumber rustled. "Sold! Sold to the first man! Sold at the full price! If I go on like that I can pay off the mortgage on the old mill and build me a house, and buy 'Liza a silk gown and little Bop a watch when he is twenty-one!"

Thus, emulating the "Maid with the Pail of Milk" and the "Glass Seller of Bagdad," Captain Allen strode toward the station, just at the edge of the little town. But before he reached the station, he saw on the roadside an excited group, mostly women, and their exclamations and questions mingled with the wild crying of a child.

Captain Allen was a man extravagantly fond of children, and, moreover, he was now in his state of "Redresser General of all Grievances"; he elbowed his way into the crowd. Sitting on a boulder was a hatless, shoeless, dirty, ragged, and very small child. He was crying stormily, furiously; as a child cries after long and painful repression, after long terror and endurance, when at last all barriers and restraints have given way, and it yields completely to the force of its woe.

"Poor little thing!" cried a woman, shrilly; "no wonder he cries. There he sat whenever

I opened my door this morning—still as a stone. After an hour or so, I went and spoke to him. He said his mammy had left him there, and told him to wait. I took him some bread and milk, and again I took him some cake; and he slept a bit. And there he's sat the blessed day, afraid to move, waiting for the wretched woman, whoever she is, to come back."

"She won't come. Never fear. She's deserted him. She's been cute enough to get the day's start and go by, before folks were up to see her, the brute!"

"Don't cry, my little man," said an old grandmother, "tell us your name. What's your name, dear?"

"Wobbie."

"Oh, Robbie. And where do you live?"

"Nowhere!"

"Oh, yes, you do. Where did you come from, tell us?"

"F'om nowhere," sobbed the child, breaking forth into renewed wails.

"There, he knows nothing, or he is so scared he has forgotten all he knows. Well, what's to be done with him? He can't sit here all night. It's going to rain, too. Can't you take him in, Mrs. Moss?"

"Me take him in!" said Mrs. Moss, who

evidently had not "been a schoolma'am," like 'Liza. "And if there is one thing Absalom hates, it is the noise of a child!"

"Yes, yes," said her neighbors, "she can't," for the vile temper of her Absalom was well known, but condoned, as for ten years he had been paralyzed from a railroad accident.

"Couldn't you see to him a bit, Mrs. Mooney?"

"The Saints forbid!" cried Mrs. Mooney. "I've raised eight, and now I live with my daughter and she has six, and they're more than she can handle, sure."

"That's true," said a big matron. "Everybody has got more than they can do for, of children. I wonder that they will keep coming when there's no room for 'em." And she eyed the weeping "Wobbie" with reprobation, as a sample of that legion of children which will insist on crowding into an over-peopled world.

"Perhaps his mother will come back for him, after all."

"Not she," cried the chorus. "She's deserted him, the tramp!"

"Mr. Beasely, don't you want him,—you've not chick or child?"

"No; and no one to mend my own stockings, let alone his," quoth Mr. Beasely, who was a bachelor.

"What's the row?" demanded Luke Martin, the sole policeman of the place, who had been summoned.

The women explained vociferously.

"Well, I suppose I must take him to the station-house"—thus designating a ten-by-twelve room behind the post-office—"and in the morning, if he's not called for, hand him over to the poormaster."

"You've no right to hand him over to the poormaster," said a hard-faced man. "Why should our county be burdened with the like of him? If you take in all the strays that are left here, we'll soon have to pay fifty cents tax on the dollar. He's not our poor. Send him where he came from."

"But we don't know where he came from."

"You've no right to burden our county, I say!"

"Oh, Sam Hastings! Burden! One little bit of a boy!"

"Yes, Mrs. Moss. Burden! It's a precedent. We don't want no such precedents. Our taxes is heavy enough now, and too heavy."

"Arrah, you don't pay any of 'em," said Mrs. Mooney.

Meanwhile the child had stopped crying—stopped from exhaustion, and to take breath.

"Come on, sonny," said the big constable, "you can't sit here."

But the child was frightened nearly into convulsions at the touch of this big, bluff man with the thick stick. He burst into renewed shrieks, and clung to the petticoat of the nearest woman.

"Can't some of you quiet him a little?" said the poor constable. "I don't want to drag him off yelling like that. People will think I'm trying to cut his throat."

The child seemed to regard this as a threat. He redoubled his shrieks. While the women said, "There, there; don't, my dear; don't take on so." "He won't hurt you." "Go with the nice man." "He'll give you a candy, sonny." "Here, dear, hush; here is a penny for you." "There's a good boy."

Another lull; but for breath, not because comforted.

"Well," said the reluctant constable, "the poorhouse is the only place, since none of you wants him."

"I want him."

It was Captain 'Zekiel.

He pushed near the child and got down on his knees. He wiped the tear-drenched face with his big bandanna. He wooed the child

with soft words. "There, my little man! Cap'n Allen likes little boys. Come with me, and you shall have some pie and a bird and a pussy cat, and a baby to play with! 'Zekiel Allen won't see a little chap sent to the poorhouse."

"Oh, the good man!" "Aye, that's right!" "Heaven be your bed!" "The Lord will reward you!" "Take him!" Thus "the chorus of the women."

"Do you mean you'll take the child, mister? I don't remember your——"

"Oh, it's Captain Allen from Lal's Mountain," cried Mrs. Mooney. "We know him—Captain 'Zekiel."

"And you really mean to take the child?" said the constable.

"Certain, why not? I've got a mill up near the mountain, and I can sell my lumber for any price I name. I've got a wife with-a-head-on-her-shoulders, and I've got two youngsters, and I'm not one of those to say there's too many children in the world. I like children. I'd as lief do for a hundred! Give me the little chap, I'll make a man of him. I'll make him Gov'nor or President, or a barge captain, or—or something!"

The lost infant, standing very short and small beside Captain 'Zekiel's six feet four inches,

locked one small hand tight in the big palm of his protector, and with the other gripped fast hold of the baggy knee of the Captain's trousers.

"I'll just take down your name and address, so I can send to you in case the mother comes back," said the relieved constable, taking out a note-book.

"She won't come!" "Never hear of her again!" "So much the better!" "The boy's in luck!" "Oh, the good man!" "That's what it is to be generous!" "Oh, the kind heart!" Amid this chant the crowd broke up, and Captain 'Zekiel and his waif marched hurriedly to the station. There was only one grimy little car to the engine. The distance to be travelled was only ten miles. One passenger, one smoky lamp, a conductor who was also brakeman — nightfall! These were Captain 'Zekiel's surroundings. The admiring crowd had fallen away from him; the inspiring "chorus of the women" no longer rung in his ears. And the mental barometer of Captain 'Zekiel was falling very fast. His drunkenness had always three stages—the second stage was sure to be one of timidity, anxiety, apprehension. Into this second stage he was now drifting out of his brief period of glory and self-sufficiency. He was going home—to a very poor home—to

a wife and two children ; and the woman-with-a-head-on-her-shoulders might make serious objections to having a new child cast upon her cares. It was borne in on the Captain's failing heart that he had reckoned without his hostess. What should he do—what should he do ? How could he encounter the redoubtable 'Liza ? What was likely to occur he knew well—for this was not the first time the Captain had been guilty of such an indiscretion.

Lower, lower, lower sank the Captain's feelings ; down, down, down into the very depths went the lately jubilant, boastful Captain.

And the car stopped. He must walk a mile to reach home. The rain was falling. The night had come. The mountain road was rutty and muddy. How this poor uncomplaining mite, clinging to his hand, lagged and stumbled and dragged ! At last the child's feet merely slid along the way as the remorseful Captain pulled him forward. Then Captain 'Zekiel picked him up to his broad breast, and the little fellow locked a pair of confiding arms around the man's horny neck, and clung to him for shelter from the storm. The Captain somehow revived a little at that clasp.

Home ! The Captain lived in two rooms at the bottom of the rickety old mill. The light

shone from the uncurtained window. 'Liza was frying ham for tea. The Captain put the boy down, opened the door, and as 'Liza, engrossed with her cooking, did not turn round, he politicly addressed her on a pleasing theme.

"'Liza, I sold the lumber—the hull bill of it—for just the price you set, 'Liza—just the price. It's to go down to-morrow, 'Liza."

"All right," said the household priestess, bent over her tripod, and pursuing her incantations with the dredging-box. The smoke of the ham, the steam of the tea-kettle rose up about her. She was a small, dark, middle-aged woman.

"Your tea smells dreadful good, 'Liza——"

"What a nice place it am!" piped the waif from behind the sheltering legs of the colossal Captain.

"What's that?" cried Mrs. 'Liza.

It was not Bop, the infant son of the home; he slept. It was not Pink; she had for an hour been hanging to the maternal skirts, "cross enough to kill," as Mrs. 'Liza said. That voice of silvery satisfaction! Mrs. 'Liza whirled about. Looking around the Captain's left leg—lo! a pair of big brown eyes in a very dirty face, a mop of very tangled brown curls, a slim, eager, shrinking, tiny, ragged figure.

"What's that?" demanded the Pythoness.

"It's—a little—a boy—I picked up," faltered

the Captain, and he passed instanter into the third stage of his drunkenness—remorse. In this stage he was always burdened with remorse, first for having ever been born, and then for everything he had ever done since he was born.

"A boy you picked up! 'Zekiel Allen! Have you done that again? 'Zekiel, you've been drinking!"

The Captain took a chair in a corner.

"I won't keep him, mind! Carry him straight back where you got him from. That's my last word."

The Captain hid his face in his hands. He must take him back! The poor, dear little boy! Consign the forlorn babe to the horrors of a county poorhouse! And he had promised to keep him. He had boasted. He had been praised by all the women. And he must go back to the constable and say, "My wife won't let me keep him." Oh dear, oh dear! And yet, the Captain had a sense of justice. Not he, but 'Liza must cook, make, wash, mend, toil for this waif if he stayed. And if she wouldn't, well—she wouldn't. The Captain groaned.

"Take him away, I tell you!" cried the angry 'Liza, brandishing the long meat-fork, and advancing on the cowed Captain. "As if I hadn't enough on my hands! And we as poor

as Job's turkey, and may have a dozen of our own; who knows! Take him off!"

"Yes, 'Liza," said the Captain, "yes, only —there isn't another train to-night, you know. And it's raining, 'Liza, and it's seven o'clock, and—oh dear——-"

"I suppose he's got to stay all night," said 'Liza, wrathfully; "but in the morning he goes packing. I'd like to know if we've got to take in every stray dog, and cat, and boy that you cast your eye on, 'Zekiel Allen? I never saw such a man in all my born days! One never knows what you'll do, when you've been drinking. Poor as we are, too! To-morrow morning, bright and early, 'Zekiel, mind."

"Yes, 'Liza," said 'Zekiel, meekly.

Meanwhile the child, drawn by the fragrance of the food and the delicious warmth of the stove, had made cautious advances into the room, and, with a prudence beyond his years, had obliterated himself, so far as possible, behind the stove. His big brown eyes gazed upon the Captain and the irate 'Liza. Did he understand the sentence pronounced against him? Mistress Allen whisked tea, potatoes, and ham upon the board. "Well, come to supper; come along, you boy! We can give you a meal, I suppose. 'Zekiel Allen, you have made a bargain!"

CHAPTER II.

TO GO, OR NOT TO GO: THAT IS THE QUESTION.

Mistress 'Liza put Pink into a high-chair, placed her at the table, and tied a bib under her chin. All 'Liza's motions were quick and nervous; now their energy was intensified by wrath. She bounced the waif into another high-chair, and tied a bib under his chin. Surely this was not out of deference to his dirty clothes. Probably it was out of deference to her own feelings, and her table-cloth.

The door opened and a boy, who made an amazing amount of noise in walking, came in and sat down by Captain 'Zekiel, at the end of the table. The Captain's remorse continued; indeed, it deepened. He repented of every mouthful of food, even as he ate it.

Pink, mollified by the sight of supper, leaned across the table-corner which separated her from her little guest, set her small white teeth together, and opening her red lips in a grin, exhibited, as with pride, the double, gleaming row. The boy smiled at her benignly. Why should he not smile? Mrs. 'Liza had heaped

his plate liberally with potatoes and gravy. Presently Pink filled a spoon from her own plate, and, leaning over, thrust it into the stranger's mouth. This was hospitality. Then, instantly, the changeful maid lifted herself in her chair, and gave "Wobbie" a resounding whack on the head. He winked back the tears like a little hero, and only nodded at her. What was a blow with a pewter spoon, to a boy eating all he wanted of hot potatoes? Then Pink, applying herself to her little mug of milk, drained it to the last drop, and burst into a loud wail for more. At once the little visitor held out his own mug to her with both his small, grimy hands saying, "Tate mine." Pink, unhesitant, took it all. It was freely given. Never until now had the boy had before him, at one meal, meat and potatoes, gravy, bread, butter, and milk. He could spare the milk. Supper over, the Captain and the noisily-walking boy took a lantern and went out. "Wobbie" again shrunk behind the stove. He had a vague feeling that if Mrs. 'Liza saw too much of him she might put him out in the rain. Heretofore weather had never offered any restraint to those who wished to thrust him out of doors.

The house-mother undressed Pink and put her to bed in the next room. It looked a won-

derful room to Robbie. It had a bed, a crib, and a trundle-bed, all of home manufacture; two great, bright, braided mats on the floor white curtains at the window; two or three gay prints on the wall, and a little table with a red cover. What a paradise!

Madame 'Liza next washed her tea-dishes, set bread-sponge, and made her kitchen tidy. Meanwhile the Captain returned and again sat desolate in the corner. Then Mrs. 'Liza took a little tin tub, put plenty of hot water therein, laid a sponge, a crash towel, a square of brown soap, and a bottle of ammonia on a chair, and, reaching in behind the stove for Robbie, said, "Now I'll make you clean if you're going to sleep in my trundle-bed."

She stripped off his one garment, a gray flannel "confection" of pants and waist, and plumped him into the tub of water. Whatever this dame did she did thoroughly, especially in the cleaning line. She administered soap and ammonia with an unsparing hand; she rubbed, she scoured, she rinsed, she polished with the crash towel. The soap-suds went into Robbie's eyes, mouth, and ears. Well, what if it did? He set his lips together, squeezed his eyelids tight shut, held his breath, and let her scrub. The water was lovely warm, the soapy sponge

was soft; unconsciously to himself something in his nature seemed responsive to this cleansing process. As Mrs. 'Liza scoured away the grime, the short hazy horror of his past seemed to fall away from him, and he was a new boy in a new world.

"There! Now for your head!" said Mrs. 'Liza.

She stood him up in the tub, braced against her knees. The little man vaguely felt as if his head had already had a full share of the scouring, but he uttered no remonstrance. Ammonia made his scalp burn, his eyes rain silent tears, his breath vanish utterly—and then the combs! A remorseless coarse comb, a tenfold remorseless fine comb! Mrs. 'Liza seemed to forget that his head was any more sensitive than a croquet-ball. She combed up, down, forward, backward, sidewise. Her victim was dumb as an Indian suffering torture. He shut his eyes tight, doubled up his little fists into two red balls, thrust his elbows in admonitory fashion into his own ribs, and—let her comb. Had he been learned in Latin he might have said to himself, "O passi graviora! Deus dabit finem, his malis quoque." As it was, no doubt he reflected that no amount of combing was so bad as to be seized ruthlessly by a handful of curls,

and have your head knocked against the wall; or to be given a fling and sent reeling across a room to hit your head on the edge of a table, and raise a big lump to last for a week; nor was standing to be combed half as bad as to cower shivering and trembling under a bed and watch a drunken man and a drunken woman throwing bottles, tongs, coals, or chairs at each other. All these had been of the varied experiences of "Wobbie's" brief sojourn here below. What, he and we ask, was the most vigorous combing in comparison? Besides, there was the stove—a beautiful shining stove, with the fire twinkling through two isinglass doors. A stove all warm and clean was more than a treat to a little man in April who had been uninterruptedly cold since last October. Robbie basked before the stove. It is true he might have baked as well as basked but for the happy accident that Dame 'Liza turned him round now and again in the exigencies of combing.

Finally: "Now you're clean!" said Mrs. 'Liza. She lifted him to her lap, wiped his feet, and stood him on the floor before her. The heat, the scrubbing, the rubbing, had made all his little naked body pink as a rose from head to heel. His clean wet hair, after the last passage through it of the comb, had divided into great

dark curls that fell over his shoulders. He looked tranquilly at his genius, with large, brown, steadfast, sleepy eyes. He was cherubic.

Mrs. 'Liza went to a blue chest, and took out a new garment of unbleached cotton. "I made it," she said, addressing herself to the room in general—"for Pink, with allowances for growing—I didn't think a little beggar would get the first wear of it." Then she dropped the garment over his head, pulled his arms into the sleeves, and buttoned it about his neck. The little beggar in this straight white array, was more angelic than ever. It is written of old, "Some have entertained angels unawares." Then Mrs. 'Liza led her beggar to the bedroom, his little feet pattering obediently in time with her own hasty tread. As Bop had pre-emption rights to the front of the trundle-bed, she lifted the beggar in behind him. Bop, feeling something warm and soft slipping in beside him, asserted his ownership, by kicking out a fat leg, and driving his bed-fellow well against the wall, then turning on his back and striking a fat fist into Robbie's eye. But what did that matter? Robbie's eyes were already closing. What were a few kicks and punches compared to a delicious, clean, soft, warm bed? A wonderful feeling of general well-being made up of cleanness, warm-

ness, softness, satiety, absorbed him. Sweet dreams came thronging to bear him away into slumber-land.

Mrs. 'Liza, a fond mother, bent to kiss the red head of Captain 'Zekiel's youngest image. Was it only one of Robbie's dreams, that for the first time in his experience a hand lingered for an instant in maternal touch on his head?

Mrs. 'Liza went back to her kitchen. She poured more hot water into the little tub, washed the waif's forlorn suit, and hung it close to the fire to dry. Then, without a word to her Captain, she sat down to darn stockings.

Meanwhile the Captain was watching all these proceedings out of the corner of his eye. There had been similar scenes once before.

The last stage of his intoxication had passed; 'Zekiel was himself again. He had expected not merely a domestic storm, but a tornado of the fiercest description. It had been violent, but brief, and its last forces had been spent in combing that curly head. The Captain seeing the stray infant's heroic conduct while being washed and combed, his genial manners to Pink, and his wisdom in hiding behind the stove, had told himself that "the boy was a reg'lar little brick." And then, how beautiful he was! Even doting parents admitted that the Captain's Bop was

homely. Pink was a pretty child, but of diabolical disposition—but this boy! what a straight, well-knit little figure! What great brown eyes, what curls! What a skin, like cream! What a smile! An infinite longing to own him, filled the soul of the child-loving Captain Allen. Brought up and living all his life in the wooded silence of the mountain-side, the Captain was filled with that intense unspoken beauty-worship which made the herdsmen and hunters of ancient Greece see demi-gods, fauns, nymphs, dryads in the woods and streams. Oh, this beautiful child, could he yield him up to the desolation of the county poorhouse, where toothless old paupers mumbled, and a stray idiot and lunatic or two, mouthed and gibbered? Could he go back to the admiring chorus of the women, the constable, and say, "Here's the boy; my wife won't have him"? Yet Mrs. 'Liza, by virtue of that head-on-her-shoulders, was the true head of the house; moreover, they were very poor, and Mrs. 'Liza was very hard worked, and—well—what cannot be gained by fighting, may sometimes be gained by waiting—so the Captain went to bed.

By five next morning, the Captain called "the Hands," and a great bustle began, getting out the lumber for Mr. Combe. "Allen's

Mill," an ancient, tumble-down structure, with a huge under-shot wheel, stood on the side of a mountain stream never too dry to drive the saw-mill, but now, full-flushed with the breaking up of the mountain snows and the spring rains, a wide swift creek, hurrying into the Schuylkill, and capable of carrying down rafts. Therefore, Captain 'Zekiel and his "Hands," were finishing making rafts of stout bark-covered logs for underpinning, and on these the other lumber was to be loaded. Then a tiller being rigged, the "Hands" and Mr. Combe would navigate one raft the nine miles of waterway to Lacy, and Captain 'Zekiel would take down the other. The Captain worked in a fury of zeal. He meant to leave no time for 'Liza to remonstrate with him about the stray boy, or to repeat her orders to carry him off on the first raft. The Captain was wont to prepare himself for unusual labors by a glass of Old Rye, but this morning it would not be well to recall to 'Liza, by drinking, his last evening's indiscretion. Moreover, if there was one thing above another that made that good woman wrathful, it was to see the Captain indulging in Old Rye. Therefore, unaided by his usual fortifier, the big Captain worked like a Hercules. He had no time to eat; he snatched his bread and bacon, and ate as he rolled logs over the

banks by mighty kicks. Eliza, with the baby over one arm, and the bill of the lumber in her right hand, came out to see that Mr. Combe got what he paid for, and no more.

The Captain worked. "The Hands" worked. Mr. Combe arrived and he worked. Mrs. 'Liza made coffee and brought it out to them. The great yellow boards were piled high on the rafts. The Captain wrought prodigies. He talked—for 'Liza's benefit. "If you'll build three or four hotels and stores at Lacy, and get the lumber of me, Mr. Combe, I think of getting more machinery here in the mill. My wife thinks if we made shingles now—things are looking up in Lacy, Mr. Combe, and all over the county."

"So they are. I brought the Jamaica, Captain; will you have a glass to help you along?"

The Captain's mouth watered, but there was 'Liza!

"No, thankee; no, not any. 'Pears to me I'm working a leetle better without it."

Presently Mrs. 'Liza went into the house. The Captain trembled. Now she was getting the boy ready to go off on the raft. She came out; the Captain was passing; she beckoned him to the bedroom window. All was over. She was about to bid him carry off his bad Bargain. He approached slowly; looked in as

'Liza's finger directed. On the pillow of the trundle-bed sat Pink in her night-gown. In one hand she held a wooden horse, trophy of her father's jack-knife; in the other a rag-doll, triumph of her mother's needle. On his knees before her—a veritable copy of the Reynolds' "Little Samuel," though the Captain and 'Liza did not know it—was the boy. One arm held securely a blue earthen bowl of bread and milk, left on the table for Pink's breakfast; the other hand was busy conveying loaded spoonfuls of this refreshment to Pink's mouth. Pink held her mouth wide as a young robin, and the boy, neat-handed, put the spoon safely within the yawning rosy cavity. Now and then Pink graciously turned a spoonful to his mouth. The Captain and 'Liza laughed and went away. Later both children were dressed and out playing. Pink hurt her finger on a board, and her ready shriek arose.

"Don't ky, boy!" called out Robbie's silvery voice as he ran up, holding his curly head low. "Don't ky; pull my hair if you like; then you'll laugh."

Pink pulled with a will and laughed.

"Now you feel nice, boy," said the stranger.

"Ain't boy—am gell," said Pink.

"Yes; now you're glad, gell," said her guest.

Then the waif approached "the Hands" occupied in taking a bit of luncheon. Though spoken of in the plural, "the Hands" was but one, a boy of fifteen—not even a whole boy, thought Robbie, only a piece of a boy. He had only one leg. A wooden leg of domestic make was firmly strapped to the stump of the missing left leg; and, as if to balance this deficiency, "the Hands" had also lost his right eye. Probably in courtesy to his having two hands, and also because every mill should need and have more than one workman, the Captain spoke of his fragmentary coadjutor as "the Hands."

Robbie surveyed this boy with interest. "Is you going to work all day?"

"No; I'm going down to the town on the raft."

"Did the lady sended you away?" asked Robbie in awed tones.

"Oh, no; I'm coming back."

"Does the lady let you stay?"

"All right; she does."

"Does the lady like you?"

"The Hands" laughed. Mrs. 'Liza had heard. She did not like the waif less for calling her "the lady."

The rafts were made and loaded. All was ready for a start. Mrs. 'Liza and the children

were nowhere to be seen. The Captain could fly unnoticed, possibly. But that hardly seemed fair to 'Liza. With reluctant steps he approached the kitchen-door. His wife was sewing. Bop sat on the floor. "Wobbie" had organized a play. "Me an' you gell is bears. We'll run at him on our knees. We'll bark ow, ow, ow, ow, only not too loud, gell, to make him ky. Come on, gell—ow, ow, ow!" Like the classic Bottom, Wobbie roared as gently as any sucking dove.

"'Liza," said the Captain faintly, "we're—going—down."

"All right," said 'Liza, never lifting her eyes.

"You—you don't want to send for anything, 'Liza?"

"No," said the dame calmly.

"I'll—'Liza—I'll get back by—seven."

"You won't if you don't hurry off," said 'Liza.

The Captain went off stupefied. Well, he had given her a fair chance. The rafts started. As they got well into mid-stream, Captain 'Zekiel saw his family on the bank watching. His wife had the baby in her arms. "Wobbie" held Pink's hand. The rafts were well made and well piled up. There was a long oar fitted at both ends of each. Mr. Combe and "the Hands"

manipulated the first raft. 'Zekiel alone proudly managed the second.

When the rafts reached Lacy, almost the first person Captain 'Zekiel saw was the constable. His heart fell. The wretched mother had come back to claim that boy! "She's found?" he asked.

"What, the tramp woman, that left the young one? You'd better believe she ain't. She'll never turn up. You've got the boy on your hands, sure enough, Cap'n; and everybody in Lacy is talking how good it is of you, too."

Oh, suppose he had brought the boy back!

"Have a glass, Cap'n, before you start for the train?" asked Mr. Combe, for politeness' sake.

Ah, it would not do to anger 'Liza by going home in any one of his three abnormal states. She would send the boy away then sure, and every one was saying how good he was, too! Besides, suppose in the *état glorieux* he should pick up another boy!

"No, thank you," said Captain Allen, and went home, without the taint of Jamaica, to his household. There were no storms that night, and Pink was not fretting. The boy in a corner was building cob-houses for her to knock over. Mistress Allen said, "I have never had such a day's peace with Pink since she was born."

While Pink was being put to bed, the waif went and climbed on Captain Allen's knee, and sat with his head leaning on the good man's broad breast. Captain Allen was not in the corner that night; he was not full of remorse; he sat by the stove and whistled "Blue Bonnets Over the Border."

The next day and the next passed, and no word was said about the boy. But the position was becoming strained; there was not that freedom of intercourse between the Captain and his 'Liza which is pleasing in the conjugal relation. Topics of conversation were scarce between them. The Captain felt that the "affair Wobbie" must be definitely settled. He took his courage in his hands. "'Liza, I'm going down to Lacy to get an order this afternoon. Are you resolved that I shall send this little man to the poorhouse?"

Pink at the word flung herself headlong on the floor, and, whirling her legs and arms like the fans of a wind-mill, shrieked at the top of her lungs. The alarmed Bop joined the pæan; Babel reigned. The little man knew that his fate wavered in the balance. By one of those divine instincts of childhood, he cast himself, not upon the Captain, but rushed, white with terror, to lay hold on the skirts of 'Liza. The Captain bowed

his head, as a criminal before the judge with the black cap. The hour of 'Liza's triumph had come! Blessed be the conqueror who knows how to administer a victory.

"The boy may stay so long as you, 'Zekiel, don't drink a drop, and you, Pink, don't have another tantrum."

These were the words of Eliza.

CHAPTER III.

THE CAPTAIN'S BARGAIN.

In 1697 the Peace of Ryswick put an end to war between England and France. Nine times has happy Utrecht seen the peace of Europe concluded within her walls, albeit often for too brief a space. The Peace of Amiens held out for a year false hopes of calm to the great Powers. The first Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle settled the question of the possession of the Netherlands; the second Peace signed in that Rhenish city seated Maria Theresa on an imperial throne. The "Holy Alliance" of emperors at Vienna dictated terms to astonished France, suddenly bereaved of her Bonapartes. By the Peace of Westphalia Sweden reached the dignity of a State of the Empire. Side by side with these famous treaties we chronicle that of Lal's Mountain, whereof Mistress Eliza Allen laid down the terms. Having formulated these conditions which were likely to secure her future domestic peace, the good woman picked

up her sewing and sat down by the window, mildly triumphant. The belligerents, Captain 'Zekiel and Pink, each laid hold on that disputed territory, Robbie, and left the kitchen. They went around the corner of the living-rooms, and below the mill, among the uninclosed underpinnings. Here, standing among the débris of many years, rusty tin, broken pottery, rotting chips, and mouldy shoes, they could look out upon the great tireless wheel, slowly revolving, its moss-green buckets ever coming up dripping from the mountain stream, the slant western sunshine making rainbows of the falling drops.

Beyond the glistening wet wheel was the wooded further bank where birds built in the thick trees and pink crane's-bill and snowy bath-flowers leaned forth from the bracken and arum.

Captain Allen reached up among the dank, cobwebby rafters and took out a large clear-glass bottle. His strong arm described two or three great circles high above his head; then a crash mingled with the monotonous jar of the wheel and the rush of the waters, and certain large pieces of broken glass lay among the stones in the bed of the stream. The Captain said nothing, but his uplifted hand fell gently upon Robbie's curly head and lay there in the fashion of

making a covenant. It was Pink's sweet, shrill voice that rose in speech—"Pink is a pitty gell! Pink don't have no tantums! No!"

But though all was thus satisfactorily concluded at the mill, the neighborhood took up the matter, and the neighborhood was a unit against Captain 'Zekiel and for Mistress 'Liza. "What did Captain Allen mean bringing home stray children in that style for his poor wife to worry over? Just like the whole Allen race, always too generous to be just. And they so poor!—loaded with mortgages of which they could scarcely pay the interest. And no house to live in, only two rooms under the mill. And poor Eliza so overworked, and at her wit's end to keep things decent. It was fair robbery of the children they had already, and——" The matrons held up their hands and raised their eyes in unspeakable reprobation of the Captain's reckless conduct.

The mentor and chief authority of the sparsely settled school district where stood Captain Allen's hereditary saw-mill was the schoolmaster. A grave, elderly, gentle, studious man, full of sympathy and empty of ambitions, he was content to live year after year among these simple folk, and now that more than two decades of his sway had gone by, he advised and

instructed these mature married people in their difficulties, financial and domestic, just as he had advised and instructed them concerning compound addition, geographic boundaries, or up-strokes and down-strokes in penmanship when they sat on the blue benches of the old school-house.

The schoolmaster boarded with Deacon Britt, the magnate of the district, and Captain Allen had no sharper censors than Deacon and Mrs. Britt. Therefore it was borne in on the mind of the schoolmaster that he should pay a visit to the mill. It might be in some sort a pastoral visit. There was no church within seven or eight miles. The pastors of several denominations came up in turn, one Sabbath afternoon in a month, and held service in the school-house. When there was a fifth Sabbath in the month, the schoolmaster had a service. His was always a temperance meeting, and Captain Allen had been wont to feel and to say that the "schoolmaster was a good man, but going a leetle farther than was required of him."

The schoolmaster found Mrs. 'Liza busy. She had ripped up a pair of the Captain's out-worn trousers, and the four pieces were laid out before her on the long kitchen-table, while she stood regarding them like the Fate Atropos,

with suspended shears. The schoolmaster was not a man of circumlocutions, and he presently introduced his theme.

"I hear the Captain has picked up another little boy. That must be very inconvenient for you, Mrs. Allen,—two besides your own."

"It appears to fit in very well just now," said 'Liza, with a dry laugh, regarding her work, as a general the plan of a battle-field. "Jerry, having only one leg, I can make him as much trousers as he needs out of the seat and the right leg of the Captain's, and the other boy is so small I can make him an entire pair out of the left leg—which is left."

These severe economies seemed hard to the schoolmaster, and then, trousers could not always be thus constructed. He continued:

"Any time, Mrs. Allen, when you find this too much for you, I'll speak to the guardians about the child."

"Well! I guess me and Captain Allen will be hard up," cried Mrs. 'Liza, valiantly, "when we can't do for a child we've seen fit to adopt. And we are not such heathens as to send a dear little innocent fellow to that hideous county almshouse. We will do better than that for him, if we are poor."

"I'm the last one to wish a child in the county-

house," said the schoolmaster. "I only spoke with a feeling for you. In such a matter more is to be regarded than money. The responsibility of a child is a great one, Mrs. Allen. The child being immortal, any work for the child runs far out, yes, through eternity. It is a work not only of feeding and clothing the body, but of nurturing the heart, the mind, the soul."

"I've precious little time to think in all those directions," said Mrs. 'Liza. "There isn't much I can do for the boy, but I can and will mother him."

Just then the child in question came in with Pink; he and she were leading between them the faltering steps of the eighteen-months-old Bop. The three went straight to Eliza, and leaned against her apron, as if she belonged equally to all of them. Tears came into the eyes of the master at this spectacle. He said, with a quiet tone:

"If you mother him, Mrs. Allen, you do the very best that can be done for him. Scripture itself cannot go beyond that, for it is written, 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.'"

Perhaps it was owing to the report of the schoolmaster that the neighborhood ceased its criticisms, and accepted "Wobbie" as part and

parcel of the Allen household. And the child made good his place there. The Captain loved him as we love that which has cost us much. None but Captain 'Zekiel knew what the renunciation of his glass of liquor had cost him. None knew how he craved his lifelong indulgence, and fought fiercely with appetite for the child's sake. None but the Captain knew how strong that appetite had become. It was like cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye to deny it.

Mrs. 'Liza loved the boy as the pledge of her greatest victory, and the assurance of her family peace. She had been sorely troubled lest Captain Allen should ruin himself and disgrace his children by falling into drunkenness. Now her horizon cleared, the great cloud of her married life had melted away under Robbie's sunny smile.

And then, there was Pink. The child was of a timid, lonely disposition and delicate health. Unwilling to play out of doors or alone, she had clung to the house and her mother, forever in the way, cross and unhealthy from lack of out-of-door air and proper sport. But Robbie was a very king of sports. From morning until night he was ready to frolic, and he rejoiced in the "greenwood tree," like another Robin Hood.

All that he had ever seen of life or play he rehearsed daily, but always in genial, innocent fashion. His "let's play" became a formula for the cure of all Pink's ills. He embraced the baby in the games, and all the baby's vandalisms. If the baby carried off playthings, and broke up toys, the scream of Pink's rage was arrested by "Let's play," "Let's play he was a wobber," "Let's play he was a big dog," "Let's play he was the bobby takin' off ze sings for went." He taught Pink how to make houses of sticks and stones, and to furnish them with acorns, broken china, and leaves and flowers. Bread, under the magic wand of his imagination, became cake and pie and meat; and water was milk, tea, coffee, soup. Out of doors, running, laughing, enjoying from morning to evening, getting healthful appetite and healthful fatigue, Pink grew plump, rosy, pleasant. Mrs. Eliza said she "never had known so much peace since she was married."

"My Bargain isn't such a bad bargain after all, is it, 'Liza?" said the Captain. "It turns out a good one."

Above the Captain's living-rooms was a workshop, where, when other work was slack, the Captain and "the Hands" made beehives, washing benches, common doors, and did other such

crude carpentry as was needed by the immediate neighbors. If the weather was bad, this shop became the playground of the children, where, under Robbie's leadership, they made boats, dolls, stores, out of chips and shavings.

On a rainy day in May, they were thus in the shop, and at last the baby had fallen asleep on a pile of shavings, and Pink was building particularly high towers all by herself. Robbie climbed to the corner of the work-bench, and watched Jerry grooving the side of a beehive for Deacon Britt.

"Jerry," said Robbie, "was you made with one leg and one eye?"

"Oh, no," said Jerry. "I had two legs, and two eyes. But I lost 'em. I lost a leg, and I lost an eye."

"Do you think, Jerry, that I'll lose a leg, and an eye?"

"Oh, I hope not," said Jerry, "for you've got as handsome a pair of eyes, and as handsome a pair of legs, as any one could wish to see. And then, you're not so unfort'nate as I am. No one ever is so unfort'nate. I was born unfort-'nate. In the first place, my father and mother died when I was a baby, and I had only my poor old granny to take care of me. When I was about your size, I began selling papers. I

kept on with that for two or three years, till one day, standing with my papers, as you may say, under my arm, looking at some men unloading a wagon of whiskey-barrels, one of the men having too much whiskey in him, let a barrel slip, and it rolled on my leg. They took me to the hospital, and my leg had to be cut off."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Robbie, deeply interested.

"When I was cured, and had a wooden leg, I went out with my papers again. Well, one night I went into a cobbler-shop, as was in the cellar, we living in the attic; and the cobbler, he was took with what they call 'tremblings,' and began to sling things around rather permiskis, thinking there was rats on the floor. One of the things he slung was an awl, and it hit my eye—and that was gone—and they took me to the hospital again. They did something to the cobbler—give him six months or so—but that didn't put back my eye, did it, now?"

Robbie shook his curly head in grave negation.

"When I came out that time, the doctors give me two dollars, and I bought a kit and set up for a shoeblack. We lived in a alley off Water Street, Philidelphy. But after awhile, along of the wet and cold of an awful bad winter, my granny having died, and nobody being left to

keep me a fire or a bit of hot victuals, why, I got the newmony on my lungs, and I got took to the hospital; that was the third time. A mighty nice place is the hospital; it's warm, it's quiet, it's clean. You gets well-treated, good bed, good grub, clean clothes. Oh, I liked the hospital first-class, and I couldn't bear to leave it. Along of my bein' so unfort'nate, they let me stop a good while. But I couldn't stop forever. Other folks wanted to come in, and I had to turn out. One of the doctors give me fifty cents, and the matron did me up extry shirt and socks in a bundle, and—there I was, outside the gate. They told me to go to my friends. But you can't go to your friends when you haven't any friends to go to, can you, now?"

Robbie shook his head to show that, in his opinion, decidedly you could not.

"Well, I hung round the hospital corner. It was in October. It began to get evenin', an' cold an' foggy, an' I bein' weak, an' only little past 'leven," added Jerry, apologetically, "I sat on the curbstone an' I cried my hardest. Just then, 'long come Cap'n Allen. He stopped to ask what was up, an' when he seen me so very unfort'nate—one eye, one leg, thin, and all that—he said, come along with him an' he'd see me all right. I'll allow," added Jerry, "from the

way the Cap'n talked—for he had been havin' a glass or two—I made sure he owned half Pennsylvany; an' that I was goin' to be dressed in welwet, an' eat off silver dishes, an' be a Cresses all my days. But after all, what's the odds? I think I like it better as it is. It suits my one eye, and my wooden leg, and my raising. Besides, what more can a man want than enough to eat, a good bed, a good fire, clean clothes, and plenty to do? Ain't that enough for a man?"

Robbie was an admirable listener; he merely nodded to show that these were his views entirely.

"But when Cap'n 'Zekiel brought me home," cried Jerry, warming to his tale, "then there was a time. They hadn't no children then, and I'll allow that when a woman gets offered to her, for her first child, a boy 'leven year old past, with a peaked face yaller with sickness, and only one eye, and a wooden leg, nat'rally that woman wouldn't be expected to take kindly to it. The ma'am, she was mad. She says to Cap'n 'Zekiel, 'That boy's goin' down to Philidelphy in the next barge as ever goes down the river, and that is Deacon Britt's,' says she, 'an' it goes this day week.' When you come here, you know, and a little breeze was raised similar, I knowed

how to feel for you. And when I see how much gumption you showed, keeping well out of sight behind the stove, an' lettin' the ma'am handle you as she liked, an' keepin' Pink pleased, I 'lowed you was the right sort."

Robbie showed all his teeth in joy of this encomium.

"Well, you see, I didn't lay out to go back to the sidewalks of Philidelphy. I had a week to get on the good side of the ma'am. When I had been let stay in the hospital, after I was pretty well, I had gone round where I liked, and a good bit in the kitchen. So I knew how to do a thing or two. Next day I asked the ma'am to let me shine the knives, an' black the stove, seein' I'd learned how to handle shoe-brushes. She let me. Then I 'lowed I could wash the dishes. Next thing I 'lowed I could do was mop the floor and clean the windows. Then, one day, when I heard the ma'am tell the Cap'n 'she couldn't get into this shop, he kep' such a plaguey litter,' I came up here an' cleaned it all up, an' shone the tools, an' went an' asked her to come see how nice it looked. I knowed she couldn't abide the noise of my leg, so one day I says to her that there was some good in a wooden leg. Boys with two own legs can be mighty softly if they like, and sneak into the

closet, an' listen behind doors, 'but wherever I am, you're bound to hear me,' says I; and the ma'am she 'lowed there was some sense in that. The day that barge of Deacon Britt's was to go down stream, I rose up early, an' told the ma'am that as there'd been a big frost, if she'd let me go up the mounting, I could bring her a lot of nuts, an' I 'lowed as she might like to have a pile of chestnuts and hickorys for winter. She told me to go, an' you may make up your mind I didn't get back till dark night, when I made sure that blessed barge was well down past Lacy. Then I came in with a bag of nuts, an' 'lowed I could get twice as many more, if she'd let me go again. I've never heard any more talk about sendin' me down to Philidelphy. For the first two years and a half I did a grist of housework, and minding Pink when she come, but I'll 'low I never was a master-hand with children. For a year and a half now, I've been the only man the Cap'n's had, an' me an' the Cap'n gets along remarkable—yes, remarkable. Because, you see, I don't mind work, an' if you're goin' to work, you might just as well work hard. You've got to do something in this world, haven't you? Well, then, I say, why not as well work as anything?"

From the vigorous way in which Robbie

nodded his head, those seemed to be his ideas exactly.

So this was the history of the Captain's other Bargain. Neither had that been a bad bargain, Mrs. 'Liza being witness. Jerry did a deal more work than most boys of fifteen who have the full complement of legs and eyes. He had a certain knack of handling a saw, a hammer, a plane; and if a neighbor came to have a bit of work done, while Captain 'Zekiel was up on the mountain looking at such stray lots of standing timber as might be offered him, Jerry was capable of doing whatever was to be done. If "the ma'am" wanted a nail driven, or a stool made, or soft-soap boiled, Jerry was on hand prompt to execute the commission. He had been to school winters until he could read and write after a fashion, but Jerry said he "didn't take to learning; a man couldn't do everything in this world, could he?"

It was in May that Mistress Eliza made a proclamation to her household. She said she had had enough of nicknames. Pink, from her red, infantile countenance, had been called Pink, until no one knew her name was Elizabeth. Bop had been adopted as short for "baby," which was a euphemism for Ezekiel. This new Bargain of the Captain's should not have a

nickname. No Robbie for him. He looked a princely child, with a right to have a full name—Robert; and nothing but Robert was henceforth to be the style of The Captain's Bargain.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUMMER SUN SHINES.

THE hereditary saw-mill of Captain Allen was one of the few survivors of the hundred brave mills which were once driven by the various waters of Schuylkill County. In early days the rugged surface of that county was covered with magnificent forests of chestnut, oak, beech, maple, birch, hemlock, poplar, and pine. Of these it has now been, unfortunately, nearly denuded. Only upon some of the most rocky hills, and along the most defiant streams, have new forests risen to replace the old. The Captain's mill stood where his grandfather had built it, but its glory had departed. All the better kinds of timber had perished. When new houses were built, brick and manufactured lumber from Maine and the Carolinas supplied the contractors. The acres which belonged to the mill were few and unproductive, and beneath their soil lay none of the mineral wealth which, suddenly developed, has enriched many of the heirs of Schuylkill lands. One misfortune after another had pursued the Allen generations.

Their little property was mortgaged. The Captain, until he reached middle-age, had been the sole support of an invalid sister. During the years of his tendance upon her, 'Liza, having been obliged to give up her early school-teaching, had been nurse and provider for a paralyzed father. At last, when both father and sister were gone, and the years of their own youth had gone also, the Captain and Eliza married. Within six months, the house, in which three generations of Allens had been sheltered, was burned to the ground, and the newly married pair saved little besides the stove, crockery, and cooking utensils of the outside kitchen. This might have overwhelmed a less energetic couple, but, gathering themselves together after the first amazement, the Captain proceeded to fit up two rooms below the mill for a domicile, and make tables, bedsteads, and other furniture therefor, while Eliza sewed and nursed for her neighbors, until she had earned enough for another plenishing of household linen, blankets, and curtains. Her busy hands were never still; she was always contriving something for her little home.

Besides the mill, the Captain owned a barge, the *Fair-Weather*. It was a wide, clumsy craft, built for safety and capacity for lading. The

Captain supplemented the small income of the mill by a yearly voyage to Philadelphia, down the Schuylkill and its system of canals.

This voyage generally occupied six weeks. It was undertaken at the beginning of June. The barge had a great square sail, which could be used when the wind chanced to serve, but its progress was generally made along the river by a setting-pole. Through the canals horses were hired for towing, though Captain Allen remembered well when he and his brother, who had long since "gone West," used themselves to tow their father's boat through the canals by fastening the towing-line to the middle of a stick, the ends of which they braced across their breasts, as they stoutly dragged their boat.

This voyage was the great event of the year to the Allens. It was a long picnic. At the city the Captain bought the one ready-made suit, and Eliza the one gown-piece, which they allowed themselves for each year. Eliza also bought a little bonnet-trimming, some shoes, factory cloth and calico. Nor was she restricted in the dear delight of shopping by the poverty of her own purse. Her neighbors sent by her for various articles, which she had the pleasure of purchasing at Philadelphia stores. But the real object of the trip was not merely buying, but selling. The

Captain sold on commission, or bought and resold, honey, butter, cheese, home-cured bacon, ham and pork, corn-husk mats, hand-knit socks and mittens, and many other articles, for which he had had for years regular purchasers in the city.

This voyage now began to be talked of. Robert understood that they were going somewhere in the boat, and he was to go too.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"Down to the city, where you came from," said Jerry.

"You won't tate me back?" cried Robert, turning wide eyes of terror on the Captain.

"No, indeed, my man, we'll keep you forever," said the Captain. It did cross his mind that if the boy were seen and claimed by his parents, he, the Captain, would be freed from his oath of abstinence. But, at the same time, the Captain felt sure that liquor drank at the expense of losing Robert would be liquor that cost far too dear. He was prepared to do valiant battle with all creation for the ownership of the child. And, indeed, even the unmaternal tramp who deserted him would not have been at all likely to recognize in the jolly, rosy, plump, spotlessly-clean child with the shining curls, the thin, pale, frightened, dirty little one she had abandoned on the roadside.

That Robert had been brought into Schuylkill county from some great city they were sure from the child's notions and remarks. When first he had seen the impetuous waters of Lal's Creek, he had said that they must come from "an awful big hyd'ant, and why did they let 'em run away?" When he saw Jerry milking the cow, he had thrown that one-eyed youth nearly into convulsions by saying that he "didn't know milk came out of a live hyd'ant." At first he was afraid to walk on the grass, lest the "bobbies," which is gamin vernacular for policemen, should "get him." As for flowers, the first day that he found Pink picking liberal dandelions and buttercups, he kept checking her, and taking the flowers from her and hiding them. At last, as the little maid kept on, and Eliza was coming, he seized all the flowers and held them himself. At this Pink wept.

"Give Pink her flowers," said Eliza.

"They's mine, I picked 'em!" insisted Robert.

"Why do you say that?" said Eliza, finally, "it is very, very naughty. I saw Pink pick them. You did not pick one."

"I picked 'em," asseverated Robert, "if Pink picked 'em the bobbies will get her—and—and she's too little for the bobbies to get. I'm big."

Thus Eliza perceived that the infant Bayard

was ready to sacrifice himself to the bobbies in the stead of Pink. In fact, Pink had a true knight in Robert. "Half for Pink" became a byword in the family. Whatever Robert got, Pink had the half, and if he divided the half, for Pink was manifestly the larger half. Every apple or orange given him by customers at the mill, every cake dealt out by Mrs. Deacon Britt, was "half for Pink." Finally, a man who was having some corn ground, for the mill had a run of stones for grinding corn, gave Robert a bright new cent. He ran to Eliza, held it up, and looked at it with eagerness.

"Tan you break it?—half for Pink!"

"Oh, no, you can't break a penny," said Eliza (who, in her school-keeping days, had broken a sixpence with Captain 'Zekiel).

Robert gave half a sigh and half a second to thought, then "All for Pink," he said, cheerfully, and handed over his first fortune with a smile.

No wonder that Captain 'Zekiel thought this little gentleman worth all the drinks in the world.

Once assured that nothing should part him from his new parents, Robert beheld with interest the process of cleaning, repairing, and lading the barge *Fair-Weather*.

"Am you going, Jerry?" he asked "the Hands" one evening. "Don't you want to go on the boat?"

"No, I ain't," said Jerry, "and I don't want to go. I don't hanker after no cities. I had enough of 'em when I was little. Cities is all smells and yells."

"You might go to the hospital again," said Robert.

"Not unless I lost one of my arms, and I hope I won't be so unfort'nate," said Jerry. "The hospital is the nicest part of the city, but this is nicer than the hospital, by a long shot. Besides, you see, Robert, somebody must stay home. There's the cow to look after, and the chickens to feed, and the pig to be tended, and the garden to be weeded and hoed, or we won't have potatoes, or beans, and corn for winter. Then somebody, like as not, will want some corn ground or some boards run out, and I've got to be here to 'tend to business."

"Won't you be lonesome, Jerry?" asked Robert.

"Not much. I'll have a tip-top time. There's all the wood-ashes from the winter leached, and the winter soap-grease ready, and I'm going to make the year's soap. The ma'am she 'lows there ain't a woman in this district can make as

good soap, both hard and soft, as Jerry can. Then the cow is giving lots of milk, and there'll be none of you here to use milk or butter, and I'll churn every week twice, and Saturdays I'll borry Deacon Britt's row-boat, and I'll go down to Lacy and sell my butter, and all the eggs the hens lay, and any garden-sass that's growed, and when the ma'am gets back I'll have a nice little bag of dollars for her. The ma'am she 'lows there never was such a feller to make a little money as Jerry. I don't want better vacation than going down to Lacy Saturdays to sell my things. The ma'am she 'lows that Jerry could make a livin' on a bare rock, and so I could."

"What could you do on the bare rock, Jerry?" asked Robert, with the earnestness of a disciple.

"I'd," said the master of economics, taken aback by the practicality of the question, "well, I'd pound up the rock, and sell it 'stead of cuttle-bone for cage-birds!"

"What makes it so much nicer here, Jerry, than in the city? What makes the city all smells and yells?" asked the pupil.

"It's my 'pinion," said the one-legged preceptor, "that what ruins the city is the whiskey. The yells comes from the whiskey out and out, fighting, falling, squabbling. The smells, they

come from dirt, the dirt you find along with the smells where it is very poor, and the poorness comes from drinking the whiskey. What makes here so much better than the city, Robert, is—water. You see the water there? It turns our mill. It waters the trees and grass and flowers. It makes all cool and clean and pleasant; and if we didn't have water here we couldn't have birds or squirrels 'round us. Our river is water. There's a big river running down the city, Robert, and it's a river of rum, and it produces accordin'." With which mystical sentence Jerry went off to feed the pig.

Robert, like Jerry, preferred the country to the city. He took readily to his rural surroundings, soon learned to drive the cow home from her feeding on the hillside, learned to spy out the birds'-nests in grass and bush, and watched them in such intense quiet as not to alarm the brooding birds. He would stand fascinated to watch the squirrels, red and gray, whirling round the tree-trunks; and then, what wordless joy he found in the downy broods of chickens! To take food and water to the speckled mothers of those fluffy, cheeping balls, was pure joy. If Robert had been an Egyptian Prince of the dynasty of the Elephantinites, he would no doubt have put the chicken among gods to be wor-

shipped. So dear were the delights of the home at the mill, that Robert's mind was equally divided between the home and the prospective trip.

While Jerry had always called his protectors "The ma'am" and "The Cap'n," Robert called them "father and mother." Jerry, well-esteemed and well-cared for, was always "the Hands." Robert slipped at once into the place of a treasured son. Nor was it without envy, that the lately criticising neighbors saw the Captain and 'Liza "come to meeting" with the new boy in their household band. "Going to meeting" was, in the Lal's Mountain district, a family affair. On the blue benches of the school-house there was, between the father and mother, no vacuum abhorred of God, occasioned by the leaving of the children to play at home during church-time. The honest people came, and brought their children. The infants sat on their mothers' knees. Sometimes they slept, sometimes they ate cake, sometimes they "spoke in meeting" a few words of infantile babble, but no minister had ever been heard of there who asked a mother to "remove that child," or to "keep that child still." The indefeasible right of the children in the house of their God was recognized. Have not children

as much right in the House of the Holy as the sparrows? "Yea, the sparrow hath found herself a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God!"

So, on those calm, fragrant, sunny, summer Sabbaths the Allen family walked the mile to the old red school-house, Captain 'Zekiel carrying Bop, and Robert leading Pink, and Jerry vigorously stumping in the rear of the line of march; and, for the first time in her life, Pink "behaved like a lady," and stared solemnly at the minister, because she was sitting by that admirable little gentleman, Robert, who seemed never once even to wink his long, curly, brown eyelashes, until the whole ceremony was ended.

"That is a lovely child," said Mrs. Deacon Britt, bestowing unlimited seed-cake on the well-behaved infant. "I wish you'd give him to me, Mrs. Allen. You have your own, you could spare him."

"He is my own, now," said 'Liza. "I couldn't spare him by any manner of means."

No. Thanks to Robert, she looked forward with unalloyed pleasure to her trip down the Schuylkill. Heretofore the stay at Philadelphia had been troubled by the numerous invitations the genial Captain received to drink—and the

great difficulty of keeping him from wasting that hard-earned money which was to pay the year's interest on the mortgage. But now, as the Captain was a man of his word, Mrs. 'Liza could take her trip with a cheerful heart.

And so, on a June day, the *Fair-Weather* started. There was a tiny cabin fitted up with three berths for the family, a little charcoal stove for the cooking, washing, and ironing. The provisions were aboard. The freight was all piled up safely under the deck, or covered with a tarred tarpaulin on the deck. There was no packing of trunks, or buying of garments, or making a travelling-gear for this journey. Eliza put a few changes of raiment into a little blue bag, and the Captain carried it aboard on his shoulder; the children went on their ship barefooted, in the ten-cent chip-hats, whereof the careful Eliza had lined the brims with green calico. "The Hands" stood on the bank and waved his arm, his crutch, and his wooden leg in farewell. Mistress 'Liza wasted no breath in telling the invaluable Jerry what to do—he knew. Like Joseph, all that his master had was under his hand.

Then Mrs. Eliza sat down on a kitchen chair beside the tiller, to lend a hand in steering, if need be; the stout Captain planted his setting-

pole in the bed of the stream, and, bowing his huge frame against it, walked in great strides along the deck; and, thus propelled, and aided by the current, the *Fair-Weather* swept away from the mill, while Robert and Pink, on their knees, leaned their heads over the low bulwarks, and laughed at their own reflections in the dancing waters. The year before, Pink had done little but scream and keep the baby screaming, all the way to Philadelphia and back—and the Captain also had visited the big bottle oftener than usual. But now, blessed be Robert's curly head! the terms of the "Treaty of Lal's Mountain" had been, "No bottle—no tantrums!" Madame Eliza was at peace.

"There are plenty to want Robert now," she had casually remarked one day, knowing well that she was prepared in her heart to fight his own mother like a lioness for the possession of him.

Down the creek, which, making a bend about the foot of Lal's Mountain, just after leaving the mill, widened and deepened, and rolled more sluggishly, until it joined the Schuylkill, they floated into the often-sung river. Above them shone, flecked here and there with soft clouds, like the famous golden fleece, those blue June skies of the Keystone State, which rival the skies

of Italy. They drifted by those "flowery banks" which were bright to the eye of the poet Moore. The long grasses, the willows and the birch leaned to touch the clear waters; the banks swept in goodly curves, now high, now low; here, little shapely cedars, like Christmas-trees, stood erect, among gray lichen-decked stones; there, brambles white with bloom, and wild-roses flushed with fragrant flowers, wreathed the banks. Little islets rose upon their right, and drifted slowly behind them, as the *Fair-Weather* went steadily on. Here a little sail-boat, or a clumsy barge, passed them or met them; here a little punt rocked on the water, while a man or a boy fished. Robert and Pink fished too, with bent pins tied to threads. They caught nothing, unless the happy thought occurred to the Captain to secretly pull up the lines and fasten to them a spool, or a bit of chip or other trash, it was all "fish" to the children. At evening the *Fair-Weather* was tied up at the bank. The Captain had friends all along the shores; he had gone up and down the Schuylkill once or twice a year for over thirty years. The friends came aboard to visit Captain 'Zekiel and 'Liza,—gray old men, with tales of "When I was young"; brisk housewives, with narrations of new recipes, and new patterns of quilts; young

men and maidens, out for an evening of courting; little children sometimes brought to play with the Captain's children.

Thanks to the Captain's former methods of good fellowship, there were big bottles brought too, sometimes, as well as babies. Great was the wonder when, with a little constrained laugh, Captain 'Zekiel said :

"No, thankee, no ; I'm sworn off that now."

Well ! well ! They looked at Mrs. 'Liza, but she said never a word. 'Liza was one of those women who can be blind and deaf whenever it suits them.

"Sworn off ! Well, 'Zekiel, has the temperance wave swept you in too? 'Pears to me it's going to sweep us all in sometime before long," said one patriarch.

"It won't sweep in all of you older men who have been taking your night-caps for fifty or sixty years," said a dame who was "visiting" with 'Liza; "you'll keep to your toddy. But that toddy generation will drop off one by one, and we'll have a generation that have suckled temperance ideas with their mothers' milk. We'll have a generation of children that hear and see, read and sing temperance, and then you'll see what the country'll rise to, when they go to the polls, straight and strong, clean skins, keen

brains, clear ideas of what ought to be and what ought not to be."

"Hear her. She's one of the lights of the temperance cause, is my niece, Sary Ann," laughed the patriarch.

"And I'm glad, Captain 'Zekiel," said Sary Ann, "that you've took the right turn in the prime of your days."

"Well, you see," said Captain 'Zekiel, "me and 'Liza, we 'dopted a boy; a little chap that seemed to need adoptin'. But we're poor, and we can't afford to lay out in all lines. It costs money to fill a jug, and it costs money to buy another child shoes, and so, and so—why—there's the boy, you see, and me and 'Liza, we have made a Bargain."

CHAPTER V.

THE ADVANTAGES OF LIVING WITH A PHILOSOPHER.

Down the river and its locks to Philadelphia, and up the stream again, after a week in the city, went the good barge *Fair-Weather*. To Robert that voyage was one splendid panorama of delight; its scenes shifting in time to a low murmurous music of waters, and singing birds, and leaves stirring in the summer breeze. In that blissful period he lost the memory of his miserable past; he no longer recollected that he had had his head knocked against the wall, or had hidden under the bed, or that he had fled shrieking from rum-maniacs, or that his toes had been frost-bitten, or his fingers blue with cold. All this that had hung in the background of his infant mind, a haze of horror, vanished out of sight, the cruise of the *Fair-Weather* coming like a curtain of beautiful golden mist, to obscure all that was behind it. Robert's life had now a fairer horizon: all about him was now green fields and blue sky, and on the verge where earth and heaven met, walked his guardian angels,

the kindly Captain, the energetic Mrs. 'Liza, and the saucy Pink.

Oh, that was indeed a beautiful six weeks. There were hours when the Captain stopped to gather up a little more cargo, and Pink and Robert went and played on the bank and picked flowers. There were Sundays when the boat was tied up, and they all went to some country church, and took dinner and tea with farmhouse acquaintances. There were admirable people who came on the boat and gave cakes and strawberries to Robert and Pink. Strawberries! The little pair sat down on the deck, each with a plate of fruit, and their finger-tips became red as the berries they conveyed to their mouths. Whenever Robert found an especially large berry it went to Pink, and not to himself. In truth, the little maid soon grew to expect it, and when the boy picked up a peculiarly luscious cone, she bent forward and opened her mouth, as if she were a mechanical toy made for seizing strawberries.

The *Fair-Weather* returned to the mill, and Jerry delivered up his trust of the estate, and with pride gave his little bag of dollars to Mrs. 'Liza. The summer went by to the tune of "Let's play" and "Half for Pink."

It was on an October Saturday, that the schoolmaster, who had been out collecting autumn

flowers, met Robert, Pink, and Bop at the edge of the wood. Robert was carrying Bop, and as Bop was both fat and struggling, Robert's face was red from his exertions. Bop, screaming lustily, was clawing promiscuously at his little nurse's hair and ears.

"Take the child home," said the schoolmaster; "he wants to go to his mother."

"Movver can't be bovvered with him," said Robert. "She's dot a pair of t'ins."

"Twins! Boys?"

Robert nodded, doubtfully.

"Girls?"

Another doubtful nod. Then the young man's face cleared. "They's half boys, and half gells. I like gells, 'cause Pink's a gell; I like boys, 'cause I'm a boy. But I've got to tend Bop. He'll det used to it, won't he? He tan't ky forever, tan he?"

No. Evidently even Bop, fine as was his capacity for crying, could not, like the stream, run on forever.

The schoolmaster thought he could not spend the rest of the day better than in taking care of the children of the woman who had endowed the world with "a pair of t'ins." He put a peppermint-drop into each open mouth, took Bop on his shoulder, and entered the woods.

"Come see what I've got," cried the happy Robert, leading the way to a tree, where the decay of the short stump of a limb had made a natural vase or bowl, which was filled with water. "See! it was all dirt and leaves, and I cleaned it out, and now it's filled up of clean water, and sings 'come and drink.' The chipmunk holds on with his feet, and puts his nose over the rim. The birds stand on the edge, and dip in their bills; the big butterflies come here and drink, too, and Pink and I stand to watch 'em! I love to give sings drinks. I put a chair by the corner of the mill, and put a pail full of water on it, for horses that come, and I lead 'em along, an' they drink a whole pail full! They drinked free pails' full, in one day—once."

"But how did you get a pail filled, Robert?"

"Oh, I tooked it in dippers. Lots of dippers, till it was full. Movver said I'd run my legs off, carrying water—but I didn't; my legs is just as good as they was." And Robert, casting down his eyes, surveyed his vigorous little person with proper pride, and continued:

"I give the mans drinks, too. You know, a man came las' yesterday, and he said, ''Zekiel, haven't you a drop to keep a man alive? I'm 'most dead for a drink.' An' I said, 'Oh, Mister, I'll get you a drink.' And I ran, and I brought

a whole dipper full—'cause he was most dead—and he looked at me real funny, and he drinked an awful lot, and he said, ''Zekiel, the boy's right; that goes to the right spot.' And they both laughed. I don't know why they laughed, and I don't know why he got 'most dead for a drink, when there was a whole river full—and I don't know why he said the 'right spot,' for there ain't but one spot, is there, and that's inside of you? I will ask Jerry all zem sings."

After this, the young chatterbox made a tour of observation, and returned on tiptoe, flushed, eager. "Come see! Come see!"

They went through a group of hemlock trees, and there Robert pointed out a great fungus, which he called a "toad-stool," on authority of Jerry. Beside it was a large wood-turtle. The reptile's head was lifted, and it was busily eating the fungus, walking slowly round it, and eating the fleshy substance, taking it off in a neat ring. It slowly chewed this pabulum and rejected the fibrous portions, so that under the fungus lay a little white circle of chewed matter. They watched while the animal went slowly around the plant, eating; and the sharp-eyed Robert pointed out two or three other toad-stools, which had been eaten up to the stem. "That's his

picnic," said Robert; "that is his table. Isn't it real funny, to eat your table?"

But while they looked, a shrill clatter rose in the wood. "Oh! There's a jaybird having a show! Let me go!" cried the new Robin Hood. And off he stole, quiet as a squirrel or rabbit, through the brush, in the direction of the sound. He came to where a tree limb reached over a little clearing. On this sat a bluejay, screaming and calling, with all his might. In hot haste, at this summons, came the birds of the wood, and seated themselves on twigs and branches. The wood-dove rested and preened its soft-gray breast; the robin sat with big, round, eager eyes, intent; the kingbird ruffled his pert crest; the woodpecker clung to a trunk, and held back his head in a suspended "drumming stroke"; the catbird lit on an outmost bough; the wren and titmouse waited. And now the bluejay's audience was complete, even to the watching brown eyes of the little boy, and the harlequin bird began to antic. He erected his head and spread his wings. He whirled, he bowed, he chattered, he lifted his tail, he danced, he pecked, he clawed, he screamed. Now he seemed a frenzied orator in the midst of his wildest flight; then he seemed a favorite clown, exhibiting in the ring; again, he was a

street mountebank, delighting his crowd. At last, the jay was tired out, and his singular performance was over; the bird subsided into calm, and looked with dignified wonder at his beholders, as if to say, "Why are you staring at me?" The bird-audience had bought no tickets of admission; they gave no applause; but when all was over, the robin flew off to hunt grubs, the woodpecker hammered on the tree, the dove sought her nest in the thickest pine, and Robert, full of admiration, ran back to tell the schoolmaster. "Whenever the jaybird calls like that, I run to see the show," said Robert.

"You are a regular little woodsman," said the schoolmaster. "When you come to school to me, I will show you books about birds and flowers."

"I'm coming when Pink is big enough to come too," said Robert. "Next summer, maybe. Father says he will teach me to read at home, first. Then I can help Pink, when she don't know anysing. Jerry is going to make us some letter-blocks. Jerry tells me lots of sings. Jerry knows everysing, most. Jerry is going to make us a cart, big enough to hold Bop, and a keg, or a big bag. And when nuts is ripe we is going, me, and Pink, and Jerry, and Bop, up the mountain, for lots of nuts. We has to

take care of Bop, me and Jerry, for Bop don't like the t'ins being in his cradle, and he leans in and pulls ze t'ins' noses. The wagon Jerry is going to make, will be big enough for ze t'ins, and next summer I can drag' em' round, outdoors."

The making of the letter-blocks and the wagon by Jerry, caused the workshop to be a very interesting place to all the children. Jerry sawed wheels out of pieces of plank, and while he was making the body of the cart, or sawing out square blocks, whereon to paste the fruitful twenty-six letters, which are the key of knowledge, Pink and Bop amused themselves for hours, rolling the wheels across the shop floor.

Doubtless the twins, sleeping in the room below, supposed themselves dwelling amid perpetual low thunders, but they soon became used to all manner of noises.

In the shop Robert much preferred conversation with Jerry to play. He regarded Jerry as a Fount of Wisdom. There was no question too abstruse to be laid before Jerry; there was none so abstruse that Jerry would not boldly venture an answer. As may have been gathered from the samples of Jerry's conversation, he was a philosopher. There are great advantages in living with a philosopher; Robert reaped these advantages.

"Jerry," said Robert, "does it make you feel bad to have only one eye? Don't you wish you could grow another eye?"

"I don't mind, I'm used to it," said Jerry, "we can get used to 'most anything in this world. I've heard of folks sleeping on beds made of spikes, or nails, till their skins got as tough as alligators' hides—alligators is a kind of reptile we don't have in this creek. And then there is some good in having a blind side. When I was at school, yonder, and the boys undertook to jibe and jeer me, for having a wooden leg, going about noisy and pegging the way I do, somehow it always happened they did it on the blind side of me, and so, I wasn't obliged to take notice and fight 'em. If I'd seen 'em, of course I'd had to fight 'em—but somehow all them little pranks was on my blind side."

"Well, I haven't any blind side, Jerry," said Robert, indignantly, "and if any boys make faces at you, I'll see 'em, I can't help seeing 'em, and I'll hit 'em too. You see, I'll hit 'em with both fists, just as hard as I can pound."

"All right, my chicken," said Jerry. "It is always proper to defend other folks, though you ain't obliged always to defend yourself. Now if anybody come 'round jibing at the

ma'am, anytime, someway it would be sure not to be on my blind side. Things in this world is—cur'ous. And there's another good in havin' a blind side. When I was up here to school, the boys used to break the rules, passing notes, and maybe passing along a handful of peas, to flip, or a pinch of pepper to put on the stove. Such things always come along to my blind side, and nat'rally I didn't see 'em. When I goes down to Lacy, to do a little business, and any one invites me into a bar to have a glass of beer, or a lemonade with a stick in it, or a little water crooked, why, all such invites and beckons hits me on the blind side, and I'm not supposed to see 'em."

"I shouldn't like lemonade with sticks nor crooked water," interposed Robert, hesitantly.

"Of course not. They're bad. Water straight, and lemonade Simon pure, that's your ticket. Then ag'in, I'm often asked by men and lads as hang 'round the mill here, to take a hand at cards. But how can I when them cards is always on the side of my blind eye, and I can't tell 'em from each other? They soon found I was no good at cards, and I spoiled all the games, along of my blind eye. Yes, Robert, a blind side is some good. You needn't always see when somebody slights you, or mocks you. There's

lots of times when it's uncommon convenient—a blind side."

"But the leg, Jerry, is it any good to have a wooden leg?"

"Lots of good, when you has one," said Jerry, cheerfully. "Why, Robert, you look here; you can get cold in both feet. I never can have but one cold foot, and that I can sit on, you see, if so be I am taking a long, cold ride or so. Then, too, when folks have two legs there's two chances of breaking 'em. But if I break my left leg it's easy mended. All I have to do is to take the axe and the plane, and a piece of wood, and make me another. Then again, one pair of shoes to me is two pairs. I buys 'em 'not rights and lefts.' I says, 'Both alike.' So one pair is two. The same with stockings. It don't take near so much to make me trousers as it does other folks. And then, I've got only one big toe to stub. Also, when I come to a big wet or muddy place, what do I do? I just put my peg leg in the middle of it, reach out my crutch, and over it I go! I never get my feet wet. How can I when I have only one foot?"

"Well, then, Jerry, wouldn't it be nice if all peoples had only one leg?"

"Well, no," said Jerry, "there ought to be a good many two-legged people in the world, for

there are things only two-legged people can do. It takes a two-legged man to make a boot. I says all these things in favor of one leg, because I have only one leg, and it's always a good plan, Robert, to be in favor of what you have, if you can't change it. If I fretted no end, it wouldn't grow me a new eye or a new leg, so what's the use of fretting? I'd better spend my ideas in looking up the good of what I've got."

"Jerry, are you going to live here at the mill all your life?" asked Robert.

"I wish I might," said Jerry, heartily.

"But, Jerry, suppose, suppose the mill all burnt up, like father says his house did? Or, suppose it fell down, movver says she believes it will some day; or, suppose, suppose everybody died, Jerry, what would you do?"

"Well, then, I'd do something else. There never is a time, Robert, when you can't do something else. If one thing's done, another comes on. It's like the garden, Robert. In the spring, early, you plant lettuce, but the time comes when the lettuce is bitter and goes to seed; but that's just the time when you can haul up the lettuce and plant your turnips for Thanksgivin' in the lettuce-beds. Now, I says to the ma'am the other day, 'What's the good of thinkin' suppose we can't pay the interest on the mortgage

and the man forecloses it? Why, ain't it just as good,' I says, 'to keep cheerful, thinking suppose we can pay the whole mortgage off, and have money enough over to build a new mill? It's as easy to suppose one as the other,' I says, 'and it's much more agreeable,' and the ma'am she allowed I was about right."

"Jerry, what's a mortgage?" asked Robert, eagerly.

"A mortgage?" said the philosopher, "a mortgage? Well, a mortgage—Robert, what is that thing under the bark of this piece of wood?"

Robert looked.

"It's a worm, Jerry, eating all the wood into holes."

"Well, Robert, a mortgage is a big worm eatin' all a piece of property into holes."

"Dear me," said Robert, looking up at the mill roof. "So there are holes, Jerry; how did there come to be a mortgage on the mill?"

"I'm afraid," said Jerry, "it got there because the Cap'n's father had what are called drinking habits, Robert, drinking habits."

"And, Jerry, what's drinking habits?"

"Drinking habits," said Jerry, sandpapering a letter-block, "are a big worm eating out a man's good sense, and his good health, and his good

feelings, and his good fortune, and all that's good about him."

"Oh, dear," said Robert. "I hope father don't have any drinking habits."

"No more he don't," said Jerry. "I have often seen, Robert, a right wise woodpecker, with a nest full of young ones to feed, settle herself on a tree where there was such a worm as this, and drive a peck straight home in the right spot, and out with that same worm, and save that tree."

Which was a parable.

"There's father coming down the road with the schoolmaster!" cried Robert, clambering down from the work-bench, and flying to meet Captain 'Zekiel.

"You are very fond of this brave little man," said the schoolmaster, as Captain 'Zekiel welcomed the boy, with a shout.

"So I am," said the Captain. "He's cost me something—a deal more than I knew at the time. I'll say it to you, schoolmaster, because I often have said to you, that you drew it too sharp on Temperance. When I brought him home, 'Liza she took a shrewd woman's advantage. 'The child or the bottle, 'Zekiel; take your choice.' That was the gist of what she laid down. 'Can I throw away such a child as that,' I says to myself, 'for the sake of an

appetite?' Well—I gave my word—and 'Zekiel Allen's word is a thing he don't take back. Then the tug came in. I never knew how I loved that bottle, nor what a hold it had of me, till I gave it up. Then I knew. I tell you, schoolmaster, it was a pull. I never was one of your boys. I left school before your time. I'm glad you are raising the boys now, so they won't get so slaved by a bottle as I was, without knowing it. Well, I think the fight is done. And it's made me more of a man. I said I never drank to hurt. But now I know that I've got clearer ideas, and a lighter feeling all through me, and look ahead more for my children, and enjoy myself more, and appreciate 'Liza Allen more, and set a better example to Jerry, and am a decenter person for these little shavers to hang 'round, since I gave up that bottle. Yes, the boy, though he doesn't know it, made a man of me."

"It was nobly done, liberally, generously done, and it is written, 'The liberal soul shall be made fat,'" said the schoolmaster.

And no doubt this was true to the Captain. Certainly he was none the less happy, when he and Eliza sat by the stove in the evening, each one with a twin, to see three little white-arrayed figures kneeling in a row by the trundle-bed, to say, "Now I lay me."

CHAPTER VI.

THE SUPERINTENDENT.

A WELL-KNOWN figure in the township of Lal's Mountain was "Superintendent Murray." He had come from New York to take charge of the interests of several stock companies, and was vaguely called "the Superintendent." The Superintendent was looked up to as a rich man. There were wonderful tales of the rapidity with which he made money: the good fortune which attended all his investments, the amount of money which he laid up every week, which was more than most of the people thereabouts laid up in a year. Indeed, lucky was he in this neighborhood who did not fall behind in his finances each year. While looked up to for his supposed riches, "the Superintendent" was feared, and whispered about, as a man who lived in a settled gloom, held himself apart from people, scarcely spoke, except in the briefest terms on necessary business, and took no interest in anything, not even in his own fortunes.

The Superintendent was not yet a middle-aged man ; but his hair was white, his shoulders were listlessly bent, his face was wrinkled and thin. He bore the marks of a man who had been shipwrecked in some of the sharpest storms of life. He was supposed to be a very learned man ; he had books and long shelves of minerals, and the country people said that magic witch-haze wands were as nothing compared to that magic of learning, whereby "the Superintendent" could read the surface of the soil, and assay the rocks, and could tell what metals or minerals might lie beneath the mosses and the grasses, the hepaticas and the anemones. The schoolmaster was the only person who had anything approaching to an intimacy with "the Superintendent." The ground of their acquaintance was that the schoolmaster had studied the county for twenty years, and knew every growth, and every soil, and every rock that could be found in it. He was passing wise as to coal fields, measures, veins, deposits, and basins ; as to ridges, troughs, dips, faults, beds, strata, splits, flaws, axes, synclinals, monoclinals, verticals, flexures, and anticlinals—in fact, ordinary people would need to have a Webster's unabridged in hand, and a few Worcesters and Johnsons for reference, if they wished to fully understand

what "the Superintendent" and the schoolmaster said, as they sat on a fallen tree, or a couple of commodious boulders.

Both of these men loved nature: the schoolmaster loved nature for the pleasing satisfaction of a curiosity, for filling up the gaps that occurred in his life, and for lifting him up above the region of daily small cares and vexations. The Superintendent loved nature as his last left resource, and that which saved him from insanity. He could not endure the face of his fellow-men, and the soothing of nature kept him from madness or suicide. In the winter, the Superintendent went to Lacy, or to the solitude of one of the great cities, where next to a desert a man can be most alone. In the summer, he made his headquarters in a little four-room chalet he had built in the highest and woodiest part of the mountain. There he was served by a deaf-mute, of about twenty, who seemed useful, contented, and fond of his master. "Would you like to be deaf and dumb, Jerry?" Robert had asked, when he had seen this youth, and been made to understand his condition.

"Well, I'll allow," said Jerry, "I'm uncommon fond of wagging my tongue, but maybe if I'd been born dumb, and so wasn't used to talking, I could do very well without. You

see, Robert, there's lots of advantages in being deaf and dumb. There's two of the commandments you can't break—the swearing commandment, and the lying one. And that's a help, seeing humans finds it such a powerful strain on 'em to keep the commandments. Moreover, you can't get yourself into trouble by speaking ill of folks; you can't make folks mad by sassing them; you can't listen to people's secrets, and tell 'em. Yes, Robert, I'll allow there's a deal of good in being born deaf and dumb; only, when you are not born that way, you're bound to be thankful according."

The occasion of these remarks was a July afternoon, the second summer of Robert's living at the mill. The place, oddly enough, was the sitting-room of Mr. Murray's chalet, where Jerry, Robert, and Pink were in full possession, the tall deaf-mute standing in the doorway, and regarding them with interest. How this happened was in this wise. Berries were abundant on the mountain, and Mrs. 'Liza had arranged that Jerry and the two children should go for three days in succession to pick the berries. Each night they came down with three well-filled pails, and Mrs. 'Liza dried some of the fruit for pies, and made the rest into jam for winter. But on the afternoon of the third day the

astute Jerry beheld a fierce storm sweeping along the gorges of the hills—thunder roared, and lightning played in the distance, and the storm drew nearer. It was necessary to get the children and the nearly filled pails into shelter. They hurried along, and as the storm broke in fury, they reached the oval clearing where stood Mr. Murray's eyrie, and in hurried Jerry, dragging his breathless charges. The Superintendent was not at home. The mute made them welcome by signs, and his silence had at once to be explained by Jerry to the anxious Robert. Just at this moment, the powerful beat of a horse's hoofs mingled with the roar of wind and thunder, and the swirl of rain, and the Superintendent came tearing up the mountain road, on his big roan. He flung himself upon the little veranda, and the well-trained brute raced 'round to the open door of his stable. Mr. Murray, to his surprise, found three big tin pails full of berries standing under his long table of geological specimens, a one-legged, one-eyed boy sitting on the window-seat, and in the middle of the floor, Robert and Pink, standing hand in hand. For the first time since it was built, the cottage had guests! The mute explained the situation to his master by signs. Robert watched the performance eagerly. But

with his native refinement he felt that permission to remain should be asked by the intruders themselves. He walked up to Mr. Murray, looked him straight in the eyes, and said: "I hope you like us to be here. We would pretty near drown out in the rain, you know."

"Yes, yes, child," began Mr. Murray, when there was a tremendous peal of thunder that shook the cottage. Pink gave a wild scream, but Robert set his lips and stood like a young hero. He braced his little body for the onset Pink made upon him, folded his arms about her, hid her face in his small jacket, and said valiantly, "Never mind, Pink! I won't let it hurt you! I'll take care of you, Pink! Nothing can hurt you when I'm holding you."

"Whose children are these?" asked Mr. Murray.

"Cap'n Allen's," said Jerry. "I'm the Cap'n's Hands."

"Yes; I've seen you before, at the mill. Well, that is a fine boy! So you are not afraid, my little fellow?"

Robert looked at him with a fine expression of pride.

"Mens is never afraid. Womens is afraid, but not mens. I always take care of Pink."

Mr. Murray sat down and beckoned the chil-

dren to him. He took a hand of each. Robert's hands were reddened with berry juice, and thoroughly scratched. Pink's were red, so was her mouth—but her scratches were few. "I think," said Mr. Murray, "that you have picked most of your sister's berries for her."

"Oh, well, Pink's little. And then Pink did put some in the pail," said Robert.

"And more in her mouth. But nearly all yours went into the pail."

"We want to take such a lot down to mother. We eat so much jam. Next winter we shall eat loads of jam, for the t'ins is getting big enough to have it."

Robert was losing some of his crooked speech, but to him "the t'ins" long remained "the t'ins."

"How many are there of you?" asked Mr. Murray.

Robert counted on his fingers, "Father, mother, Jerry, Pink, me, Bop, one t'in, 'nother t'in, six."

Mr. Murray sighed.

"Haven't you any little boys and gells?" asked Robert gently.

Mr. Murray shook his head, and looked gloomily at the storm.

"When we went down in the barge this summer," said Robert, "I saw lots of very

pretty little boys and gells in the street—and they had rags, and nobody tooked any care of them, and they was so poor—why don't you go and buy some of them?"

Mr. Murray shook his head.

"Haven't you any money?" asked Robert, timidly. "When father don't get things, it is because he hasn't any money. I'm going to sell some berries next week, to Mrs. Britt, and all the eggs of my little hen, and I'm going to pay father's mortgage with it. A mortgage, you know, is—a—a big worm that eats holes in the wood of our house—and—and it has to be paid to stop—only—Jerry has seen a woodpecker—" he hesitated, reading unqualified amazement in his host's sad gray eyes. He looked anxiously toward Jerry. "Jerry, I hope you only told me what's so—for—for I believe you, Jerry."

"Yes," said Jerry, "I told you what is so—only as you may say, I put it in parables, and I'll allow I've made a mess of it."

"It is all right, I understand," said Mr. Murray, passing his hand slowly over Robert's brown curls, which were 'Liza's pride. The good woman would have sat up nights to make time to dress Robert's beautiful hair, rather than shear her little Samson.

"This is a beautiful house," said Robert;

"our house has only two rooms in it. Jerry has a little room off the shop. We are pretty snug, father says, but when he gets rich he will build a house. Bop and me we has a trundle-bed in the kitchen, and Pink and the t'ins has a trundle-bed in the other room; and father made the trundle-beds, and he says he don't mind, he'd as lief make six. I don't know where he'd stand six, do you, Jerry?" But Jerry had quietly rolled out of the window, and gone to the extremity of the veranda—Robert's appeals were too personal.

"This house has very pretty things," said Robert; "may we look at your things? Then I can tell mother how pretty they are."

"Certainly," said Mr. Murray, and leaning back in his chair, he spread his kerchief over his face, as if asleep. Robert passed slowly about the room, and then through the open door into the next room. He held Pink by the hand, and looked with smiling interest at the various little conveniences, and ornaments, and instruments which were new to him. He not only did not touch anything, but he did not even stand very near any object, and if Pink so much as held out a small dimpled finger in admiration, he repressed her, by pressing her hand down, and saying, "Don't touch, Pink."

All at once Mr. Murray sprung up, and made a dash into the room where they were. "The gun is loaded! I was afraid you might handle it!" he exclaimed, in answer to Robert's look of question.

"It's your gun. We wouldn't touch your things, you know," said Robert.

"You are a well-brought-up child," said Mr. Murray, and going into another room he came back with a tray of bread and butter, cold tongue, jelly, milk, the various products of his mute's housekeeping, and sat down with the children for a luncheon. Robert ate his rather uneasily, and his big brown eyes rolled toward Jerry's corner of the veranda. Mr. Murray filled a plate and took it to Jerry, and then Robert's content seemed complete.

When the storm was over, Mr. Murray had his horse brought round and mounted it, taking Robert on one knee and Pink on the other, to carry them down the mountain. When they were nearly down, they met Captain Allen coming up.

"I was away," he said, "and as soon as I got back I hurried after them; the missis is in a great state, though Jerry is good as gold." He held up his arms and Mr. Murray gave him Pink; then, much more reluctantly, he handed

over Robert. "I envy you that little man," he said. "How old is he?"

"About six. Aren't you, Robert?"

Robert nodded. He was any age they chose to make him.

A week or so later, Mr. Murray and the schoolmaster were sitting on a log not far from the mill. The Superintendent was waiting for Captain Allen; he had come to order a few boards, and had fallen in with the schoolmaster.

"If you do not wish to wait," said the master, "speak to Mrs. Allen. She is the real head of the business; she does all the measuring and calculating, and tells 'Zekiel what bargains to make. The Captain is the poorest possible hand at figures."

"I don't mind waiting," said the Superintendent. "It is worth while to see that boy play. With what a will he goes at it, and takes the other children all into his games, even to those two babies sitting in the little cart. He is a splendid child. I envy Captain Allen."

"And, no doubt, in some respects, he envies you. He is burdened with debts, and one misfortune after another prevents his making any headway. No doubt he thinks you a very fortunate man. All do about here."

"I should think they would know better if

they look at me," said the Superintendent, touching his white hair and lined face. "Are these the footprints of joy?"

"People struggling with poverty are apt to measure happiness by wealth," said the master. "I don't think Allen does."

"He need not. He has a wife and children, and a home."

"And you have none?" ventured the schoolmaster.

Mr. Murray shook his head.

"You are young yet," said the master; "all these possibilities are open to you. I do not know but the man who can maintain a family, owes it to the good of his age and of his country to raise such a family."

"I had," said Mr. Murray, "a wife and child. I lost them. I cannot reconstruct a home on the grave of the past. When I stood by my wife's coffin, I knew that all for me had ended. Since then I do not live,—I exist."

The schoolmaster was not of those who offer idle words to sorrow. He knew how to be silent.

"That child—that boy—recalls to me what my child might have been. And so, I have spoken. It is not my way to speak. He was at my house the other day, and since then I have

thought, day and night, how full my life might have been of energy and hope and joy, if I had such a son. Since I lost mine, fate, as if in irony, has given me money instead of wife and child. I gather carelessly, without interest in it. I invest heedlessly, as one who does not care to prosper, and while the eager and the needy lose, I gain. I gain money which I neither need, nor use, nor desire, nor rejoice in. There is a verse in the Scripture: 'There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother; yet there is no end of all his labor; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, for whom do I labor, and bereave my soul of good? This also is vanity, yea, it is also a sore travail.'"

"You might, at least, have the satisfac tion of doing good with it," said the school master.

"I might, but I suppose I am of a selfish nature. I only care to lavish on what is my own, on what I love."

"You can, perhaps, cultivate a wider love," said the master. "Such has grown in me. I am willing now to spend my thought and care ror these people. They and all their interests are dear to me. My pupils are my children."

Mr. Murray shook his head.

"'You speak that never had a child.' Still, you labor to more profit than I do. You deal with hearts and brains; I deal with stones. Schoolmaster! Whatever you do, teach your pupils temperance! Day by day teach it, preach it, commend it, weave it with every lesson, build it into the very fabric of their brains. If you leave that untaught, you spend your labor for that which satisfieth not!"

Mr. Murray rose, and stood before the surprised schoolmaster.

"I have heard that Allen drank once. When that child comes into your school, teach him temperance day by day. Render it impossible that the demon of intemperance may ever curse and blight a child of so much promise! Here am I—I had good birth, good breeding, education, fortune, friends, family, home, hope, happiness—I stand here before you, scorched and blasted, ruined, hopeless, miserable. All because when they taught me so many other things they failed to teach me temperance. I have learned it too late, when all is lost. What good is it now to hate and loathe and reprobate the devil that drove me to destruction? Save your boys, schoolmaster; and, above all, save this boy of Allen's!"

He turned, and began to hurry away.

"Come back, you have not seen Captain Allen!" cried the schoolmaster.

But the Superintendent paid no heed to him. He plunged into the woods, and as he went he thrust into his breast-pocket a handful of wild asters that Robert had picked for him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

THE Superintendent never resumed the confidence he had begun to the schoolmaster, as they sat near the mill. As it was the first, so it was the last unveiling of his inner life. It had been one of those sudden expansions of which even the most reticent of natures now and again feel the need—and of which they always repent. The Superintendent shut himself up in greater reserve than ever.

But the schoolmaster did not forget. He had been very greatly surprised, and he often recurred to what the Superintendent had spoken. Mr. Murray bore none of the physical or mental marks of a man that had ever indulged in intoxicants. In what way had the fiery breath of the demon swept over him, and seared and blasted all his life?

But while making no more revelations of himself, Mr. Murray did not relax his interest in Robert. The child fascinated him. Instead of going to his lonely cottage by a bridle-path

which few ever traversed, he now went and came by the road which passed the mill. He always stopped and spoke to Robert, and often took the boy up before him, and let him have a ride, even going several times up and down the same quarter of a mile, that the child's ride might be longer. This was fine. But Robert's joy was modified by the fact that while he rode away in state, like a Prince in a Fairy Tale, Pink and Bop and the twins were left on common ground, and often roaring lustily. That was more than he could stand.

"I likes the ride," he said, finally, looking Mr. Murray squarely in the face, as was his wont in speaking. "But, I guess, I'd better stay on the ground, with them."

"Why cannot you have your ride in peace, even if they are crying?" said the Superintendent.

Robert lifted his steadfast gaze to the speaker's face. "Because, I loves 'em," he said simply.

Such love as this Mr. Murray thought would be well worth the winning. The possession of a child like Robert would add a joy to life, and make it a pleasant thing to live. To gain Robert's love he redoubled his attentions. He brought the child presents. First, a pocket full of bright marbles. Those were kept in a drawer,

and only looked at and handled occasionally. Because if the boy played with them on the floor, Bop and the twins might be choked in ineffectual efforts to eat them. Next he received a beautiful red and green ball, of India-rubber. But Bop flung that into the creek, and it went bobbing away down the stream, like some bright little buoy that had drifted from its anchorage. Often Mr. Murray stooped from his horse to put candies, apples, oranges, picture-books into Robert's uplifted hands.

The men who were driving a wagon for the Superintendent, left one day at the mill a splendid rocking-horse, with red and gilt caparisons and flowing tail. When winter came, there came also a handsome red sled, with a big blue R upon it. Jerry made a box for this sled, and Robert was more than happy dragging Pink and Bop about in the snow. Christmas brought a blue cap with a gilt cord, a pair of mittens with fur tops, and a fur collar. The congregation at the school-house said it was "clean extravagance the way 'Zekiel Allen dressed out that boy." But, in fact, Captain Ezekiel would have been better pleased if the gifts had not come. In his secret heart he hoped that by spring Mr. Murray would have lost his interest in the long-unseen Robert.

But spring brought back Mr. Murray—and with him a soldier's outfit—a drum, sash, sword, trumpet, and toy gun for Robert. There was not an item for any of the others; but that did not matter, for Pink pounded the drum, and Bop blew the trumpet, and Robert made flags for each of the twins to carry, and the joyful procession marched up and down before the mill, deploying, wheeling, right flank! left flank! forward, march! charge! in grand style. They were very happy with the new toys, but Captain 'Zekiel felt a jealous suspicion of them. It was not that his own children got none—oh, no; but that the presents were evidently meant to bribe the love of Robert.

"The Superintendent is rich," he said one evening when Robert rushed in, triumphant, waving a "Jack the Giant-Killer" with glaring pictures. "He can give you more than I can."

"But he isn't you, father!" said Robert, discerning with prescient love the secret pain, and slipping in between the Captain's knees and leaning back on his breast, "he's only another man."

"Aye, but he wants to make you love him more than you do us," said the jealous Captain. "If he had you up to his house he could give you a pocket full of trinkets every day."

"But he couldn't give me Pink," said Robert, "and he didn't make my trundle-bed; you did."

"I see," said Mrs. 'Liza, sewing with tenfold energy. "The Superintendent wants to take Robert from us."

"But he couldn't!" cried Robert. "You wouldn't let him, mother! You won't let him have me or Pink or Bop, or any of us!"

For the time had not only passed when Robert feared that he would be sent away, but he had now no realizing sense that he belonged to the household any less than Pink and the others. And it had faded out of his mind that Captain 'Zekiel had found him, a forlorn, weeping stray, abandoned by a tramp, on the roadside. He realized, however, that the Captain and Eliza were jealous of the attentions and caresses of Mr. Murray, and that made him more shy with the Superintendent. He did not now always run out with a shout of welcome when he heard the hoofs of the tall roan. He could not be less than gracious and attractive, for that was his nature, but Mr. Murray saw that he made no progress with the child. The Superintendent had a disposition that demanded all or nothing. If Robert had learned to love him more than any one else, had been willing to go away and live with him, and never return to his home at the

mill, that would have pleased Mr. Murray. He would not have considered that such an abandonment of his family argued a less steadfast and faithful nature than it would be good to see. He wondered at his own craving fondness for Robert. He said to himself, and once or twice at the mill to Captain Allen, "That boy ought to be mine"; "If I had that boy I'd do well by him"; "If I had a son he would be like that." When, the next summer, he used to meet Robert and Pink trudging to the red school-house, Robert carrying the little lunch-basket and the books of both, never thinking of asking Pink to carry anything, Mr. Murray would indulge in a dream about—if the boy were his what he would do for him, what an education he would give him, what heights he might gain. He could not resist the temptation of stopping now and then at the school-house to hear Robert read, which he did with notably less sing-song than the other children, or to see him "spell down" his class in words of four or five letters; or even to hear him "speak a piece" on Wednesday afternoons.

"That is a very bright child," he said to the schoolmaster; "quite worth teaching. He is worth all the rest of the lot put together."

And Mr. Murray glanced with indifference at the other pupils. He was not one of those who

regard with respect and interest the young heir of immortality wherever found. The schoolmaster rather resented this undervaluing of his other neophytes.

"They are all nice children," he said, "honest, kindly, industrious. Some of those who seem most slow have very good minds, and are of those that will be heard of. Out of just such red school-houses, off just such blue benches as mine, have come some of our noblest, wisest, most useful, most famous men."

"Oh, yes, I know," said Mr. Murray, "but this boy is a jewel. I wonder how he comes to be so different from the rest of Allen's children. Allen is a huge, roughly-built, sandy-haired man; his wife a small, dark, black-eyed, wiry woman. Little Pink is a pretty child, quite the best you could expect from her parents. Bop and the twins are downright homely little youngsters. But look at Robert. See how well he is made; see how he carries his head, and see those curls. I respect Mrs. Allen for not being such a vandal as to cut them off. See what lovely eyes: I have seen such eyes—long ago. What refined features. Schoolmaster, you study such things. What blood has cropped out here? Why is the boy so different from his family?"

"The explanation just here is plain and

easy," said the schoolmaster. "The boy is not like the family, because he does not belong to the family. A poor woman—a drunken woman, I believe—died down here in Lacy, and left the child to her family, who were too poor to take care of him, and so Captain Allen, who found him crying as they were taking him to the poorhouse, took pity on him, and adopted him, and he is bound to him until he is twenty-one."

The schoolmaster was a man of veracity, and supposed he was telling the exact truth. But it was now three years since the incidents occurred which he endeavored to narrate, and they had nearly passed from his mind, and were also mingled with the various gossipping versions of the neighborhood. It was thus he garbled Robert's simple story.

"An adoption!" cried Mr. Murray. "Such a child as that in want of a home, going a-begging for a family! Why wasn't I the one to pass by as he was going to the poorhouse? I might have had him! I could have done more for him than Allen. Why was it not my luck to get him? That is just my fortune; money, only money—not the child—and I might have had him, if I had been the one to pass by."

The schoolmaster felt pretty sure that if Mr. Murray had been the one to hear Robert's in-

fant wails, he would very likely have not been the one to heed. He might not have noticed at all, or he might have said, why did not some of the women do for him? or he would have thought it was the county's duty to see to him. Now that the child was grown strong and handsome, and well-ordered, he wanted him.

"But your question of heredity is not solved," said the schoolmaster. "It is much less strange, that a frank, generous, kindly little man like that, should be the son of Captain Allen and Eliza, than that he should be the child of some degraded, drunken beggar. The truth about Robert's heredity is even more puzzling than you supposed it to be."

"It passes comprehension," said the Superintendent; "and, if he is the child of a drunken mother, it is only more instantly necessary that you remember my words to you, schoolmaster, and teach him temperance. What a cruel shame, if owing to some inherited thirst, that beautiful boy should fall under the curse of the age. Are you teaching him temperance?"

"Yes; I am teaching them all temperance," said the schoolmaster. And so he was, in his own fashion.

Mr. Murray happened to look in at the school-house window, one afternoon, just as one

of these lessons was being given, and he remained, an auditor, until it was finished.

The schoolmaster, with the savings of two laborious years, had treated himself to a fine large microscope. This instrument, in its mahogany case, occupied a place of honor on a side table. It was a world of wonder, a more than Aladdin's lamp to the children, who looked with joy to the occasions when the schoolmaster revealed to their wondering gaze its enchantments. Whenever the schoolmaster took a little key from his vest-pocket, and approached the sacred altar, where reposed the marvel, the children stowed their books under the blue desks, and fairly held their breath with expectation. Any one of them might have the honor of being summoned as officiating acolyte of the occasion.

On this afternoon the schoolmaster had a bowl of water and some small green weeds from the nearest pond. He put some of the green plant in a large, clear glass. As it floated, the children coming near to look, one by one, saw that the plant seemed supplied with minute green sacs filled with air.

"Now take your seats," said the master. "This is called a bladder-plant, from these wee green bladders, whereby it floats. Listen, and Nathan will tell you what he sees. Nathan, come forward."

Nathan came gladly.

"Now, tell us what you see in the water, Nathan."

"I see little live things; some have little shells on them like muscles, only they look about as big as tiny pin-heads. Some have little whirling wheels on their heads. A good many are like very, very wee caterpillars."

"Those last are the water-bears," said the schoolmaster. "Now look at the bladder-plant."

"The bladders," said Nathan, "are little bags. Their mouths are open. They are set round with hairs. Some of the bags look full of something, and dark. Some of them seem to have some live thing kicking in them. Some are empty, and as you look in at the door it is like a little clear green room. O! I see a water-bear swimming up to one! He looks in. He seems to think it is pretty. I guess he wants to know what is inside. Now he swims to one of the bags where there is something kicking. He looks in there. Now he goes to an empty one. Now he swims by. No; he changes his mind. He thinks he will go in. He pokes in his head. The little hairs at the door bend inward, they let him go in easy. He is in! Oh, now he is trying to come out!"

Great excitement in the listening school, eyes wide open, heads bent forward.

"Can he get out?" cried some one.

"No! no! he can't," exclaimed Nathan, all eager. "The hairs bend in and let him in, but he cannot get by them to go out! They won't bend out. Oh, he can't get out."

The schoolmaster now took one of the dark full sacs, cut it open with a very fine sharp instrument, and put it under the glass.

"Now what, Nathan?"

"Oh, that bag is full of dead things, of what you might call the bones of these bits of creatures, the shells off one of those tiny things like muscles. They are things that have gone in, and have got all melted up."

"Here is another," said the schoolmaster, putting a lighter green sac in place, also cut open. "What now?"

"That is the very sac the water-bear looked into to see something kicking. The kicking thing was another water-bear. Now it is dead. The one that went in just now is kicking too."

The schoolmaster took that sac, also, opened it, and released the struggling water-bear.

"What now, Nathan?"

"He is out, but he doesn't feel good. He doesn't swim round as he did before he went in. I think he is going to die, schoolmaster. Oh, here

is another bear just going into a sac. Let him out quick, won't you?"

The schoolmaster opened the sac, and the freed little animal swam off.

"He got out, right off, and nothing but him," said Nathan. "Schoolmaster, isn't it queer that when they look in and see the dead ones, and the bones and skins, or see other ones caught and kicking, and can't get out, that they don't learn better than to go in themselves? I should think they'd have sense to keep out!"

"People do not have sense to keep out, when the circumstances are just about the same. Now, all of you children, listen. You know what Nathan has told you of these little, gay palace-rooms where the doors open in, and not out, and the things which swim by seem curious to know what is inside. Some of these gay places hold struggling captives; others are full of the relics of the dead. Now, that is a little parable to you. Let the little green sacs stand for places where strong drink is sold. Those who enter such places form the drinking habit, and then they cannot get free of it. Persons, yet free, look into these dens for drinking. They see in them people all ragged, dirty, poor, unhappy, bloated, crazy, sick, wrecked and ruined victims of the habit. They see yet others, who mourn

that they are enslaved, who have a sense of shame and danger, and struggle to get rid of the appetite that makes prisoners of them, and will destroy them. In this little plant, when the little animals get into the sacs, the plant melts up their bodies, and seems to suck up their juice and feed on it, until nothing is left but the fine bony parts. So the unhappy person who goes into a grog-shop finds that the dealer feeds on him until his health and happiness and money and respectability are all gone, and perhaps nothing is left of him but the poor body that is ready for the potter's field. Is it not strange that when we see how many persons are utterly ruined by drink, any of us will venture into places where drink is sold, and will even ourselves begin to taste the fatal liquor? Why are we not warned by seeing our friends and companions who were once safe and happy, now struggling in the snare of drunkenness? You saw how, when I let one of those water-bears out of the prison he had walked into, it was too late to do him much good. He was free, but he died because he had been poisoned thoroughly before he got out. So, there are some who, by some strong efforts, are rescued at last from strong drink, but not until their health and property have been destroyed, and they can never again

be the people that once they were. Then, I let one little water-bear out so soon that he was in a little time as safe and well as before. I wonder if he will take warning, and never go into such a trap again? Whenever you see a place for selling whiskey, I want you to think of the little water-bears and other water creatures which enter the snares of the bladder-plant. Now, Nathan, last night I saw you and Sam, when you had been sent on an errand to the store, stop at the door of the cross-roads tavern, and finally step into the bar-room to see what was going on."

"But, schoolmaster! we never touched a drop!" cried Nathan and Sam, turning very red.

"I know it, I watched. If one of you had so much as held out a hand toward a glass of beer, or any liquor, I should have dragged you out, and I don't know but I should have given you a whipping then and there. Now, why should you venture into such a place when you know some men about here are poor, ruined, miserable wrecks, all from beginning, by looking in, then going in, then tasting, then drinking more and more? Why, when you see one or two young men hereabouts, caught in this snare, lamenting it, trying to reform, succeeding, failing, will you venture on the beginning of such

a way? Remember what came of the curiosity of the water-bear. Remember, the doors of the bladder-plant open in but not out. It is easy enough to get in, but it takes a miracle to get out. Now, Nathan and Sam, stand one on each end of the platform, while you and the whole school learn this verse that I write on the board. 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.' Do you see what that means? You are not to go walking about where you will see wickedness, you are not to stand to look on and be amused by wickedness; and then you will not be likely to be sitting down to take a share in wicked doings."

It was not only in the school-room that the master gave his moral lessons. He was much with his pupils out of doors. Many a ramble they took with him, and many an hour did he spend, sitting on a fence and chatting to them, as they worked in the gardens. He could find on every hand some theme for pertinent and profitable remark.

Mrs. Britt's two grandsons were weeding her vegetable-beds one Saturday, and Pink and Robert stood looking on. The schoolmaster was sitting on the gate-post. "Robert," he said,

"bring me that branch which hangs out near your shoulder."

Robert carefully broke off the little branch in question.

"Do you see these curled-up leaves?" said the schoolmaster, pointing to some leaves rolled together until they hung like little long purses.

The boys looked at these little leaf-bags.

"Do you see," said the master, "there is a tiny caterpillar in each one. He has made this nest for himself, by spinning lines of silk across the leaf, from edge to edge. By shortening the lines he has bent the leaf, until the edges come together. Thus he has a neat little silk-lined house. Look at the way in which he has made a cover or roof; would you think so humble a creature had such ingenuity? He has bitten a line nearly across, below the tip of the leaf, and so it has bent downward, and he is shielded from dew, sun, and rain. But, now look at this." The master held out two or three purses, where the carefully-made green roof had been eaten up, and only the dry mid-vein left. "These caterpillars, after so much care in constructing a home with a roof, are given, oddly enough, to eating their roofs. They lie in their nests and gnaw off the roof, Then they are exposed to heat and wet. Their

home is spoiled. Now, Robert, look at this other branch."

"Oh! that is queerer still!" cried Robert. "Here are purse houses, that have been all gnawed away, and the poor little caterpillars have only a few dry threads to cover them. They lie on the stems, as if they felt very badly. Their homes are more worn out than our mill," added Robert, with a sigh.

"Now, this is another kind of caterpillar, and it not only eats its roof, but it eats all its house. It constructs it carefully, of a silk-lined leaf—and then destroys it. It is now turned out to the weather, and by this time it is getting perhaps old and weary in its caterpillar life, and almost ready to go into its next, or pupa state, and it is too late to build another snug home."

"What a fool it is!" said Tom Britt. "The idea of taking pains to build a nice house, and then turning yourself out of it—by eating it up!"

"Did you never see men act just so?" said the master. "Many an one have I known, who has built up a pleasant home and has then drunk the roof from over his head—or drunk up his whole home. Many a homeless drunkard is homeless because he has drunk up furniture, house, and fields. I have known men to

swallow big houses and little gardens and farms —indeed the entire product of years of industry.

"Look at these caterpillars again. When they are young and growing, they cast their skins, coming out of the old skin that is too small, as the chick comes out of the shell. The first thing they do, is to turn about and eat the cast-off skin! That is all right; and may be useful for a caterpillar. But, I have known men to drink up the clothes off their own backs, and the entire wardrobe of their family. That is not well for a man. Now, boys, whenever you see caterpillars, remember what I have told you, and that he who begins to drink is very likely to go on, until he commits the folly of drinking up all that he has. The Scripture says, 'The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty.'"

One day when the children came to school, they saw in a jar on the master's table, a queer green and red plant, which had its leaves growing doubled together in the form of pitchers. They were pretty little pitchers indeed. The seam where the edges joined, and the rims of the pitchers, were yellow; the inside of the pitcher's throat was spotted with red and yellow.

"What are these?" said the schoolmaster.

"They are pitcher-plants; you got 'em at the swamp," said Tom.

"Now look you, boys," said the master, "each one of these pretty pitchers is a deceitful tavern. This is the fly's tavern, where he comes to grief. Do you see these gay red and yellow colors? These are like signs and colored-glass windows, and all manner of ornaments, to lure customers toward the tavern. All up that yellow line is a sweet juice in little drops. The flies are enticed to the plant by the color, then they take a taste of the sweet dew on the line of yellow. It tastes nice, and they go on eating. That is as the sugar and spices and ice and lemons, and so on, that are mixed with the drinks to beguile people to grow fond of them. Well, up the pitcher the flies go, sipping, sipping, and so, before they know it, they are over the brim! Well, what then? Why, these pitchers are full of another kind of juice. If you taste it, you will find it has a biting, stinging taste. And that juice makes the poor flies giddy and drunk. As soon as they sip it, they fall forward on their heads. If you take them out when they have had some of it, they fall about and soon die, unless their taste has been very little indeed. The juice in the pitcher makes the flies act just like drunken men. They fall around, and do not

know what they are doing, and cannot help themselves. And so they drown in the liquor stored up in the pretty pitcher, the deceitful tavern plant. You will see in these pitchers dozens of dead insects. The cruel tavern melts up their substance and feeds upon it."

Then the schoolmaster passed the pitcher-plants about, and the children saw for themselves the two kinds of juice and the dead flies.

On another day he showed them the gay little sundews, which with red rays and sweet honey-drops, attract small insects, and so entangle them in a sticky fluid, and pierce their bodies, and hold them fast, and suck up all their juices to feed the plant.

Such were some of the lessons of the schoolmaster.

CHAPTER VIII.

"MR. MURRAY MAKES AN OFFER."

THE information that Robert was only the adopted child of Captain Ezekiel Allen, stimulated the desire of the Superintendent to possess him. The day might come when the Allens could be persuaded to give him up. Or, some day the boy might be brought to realize the advantages he could receive as the adopted son of the rich man, and so elect to forsake his poorer foster-parents. Mr. Murray was a man of long ideas: he could plan far off toward an end. He continued his kindness to Robert, saw him whenever he could, and carefully acquainted himself with Captain Allen's affairs.

The six weeks each summer when the Allens were away on the barge *Fair-Weather* were long and tedious weeks to Mr. Murray; he pined for a sight of Robert's handsome face.

His presents continued. Robert had the best knife of any boy in the school. He had a nice little pocket-book, though in truth it was seldom that he had more than a cent in it—for

Mr. Murray never gave him money. Money was to be the culminating bribe to the growing lad, who had been taught, by want, to know its worth. Robert had a box of pens and pencils; he had a book-strap; he might have had a handsome suit of clothes.

"If you will come with me to Lacy, my lad," said the Superintendent, "I'll buy you a new suit, all blue cloth and gilt buttons."

But Robert shook his head resolutely.

"What's the matter? Don't you want new clothes?"

"No, sir. I don't want to be dressed better than the rest of them. I don't want blue clothes and brass buttons, when my father and mother and Pink don't have new things."

Mr. Murray could not but admire the feeling, but he wanted to see Robert dressed according to his ideal. "I'll give Pink a new suit too," he said, slowly.

"I must ask mother before I say," said Robert. "But you know father wouldn't take clothes, only what he earned and paid for; and I don't think I ought to be dressed better than my father."

He told his mother about the proffered clothes for himself and Pink.

"You shall do as you please, Robert," said

Mrs. 'Liza, who was washing, and she rubbed the suds from her arms, and leaned on her wash-board, as she spoke; "only you must think of this: Mr. Murray may give you and Pink nicer clothes than you ever had before, or could get again. They would make your other clothes seem very poor and shabby to you, and when the new ones were gone, you might never feel contented in such poorer things as we can give you. The new clothes might just make you both vain, and spoil your notions. But, do as you like, child."

"I like not to have any clothes but what you get me; don't you, Pink?" said Robert, promptly.

The little maid, who was now eight, and who saw a very pretty little face reflected when she gazed into the square foot of looking-glass, or into a pool or tub of water, assented, much more reluctantly than Robert, to Eliza's reasonings.

"Ye–ess—only—I would like a blue dress, with trimming on it, so much," she said.

"Never mind, Pink, dear," said Robert, patting her cheek. "We don't care! Our things are good enough, and then mother made 'em! That makes them good enough, don't it, Pink? And when I'm big, Pink, I'm going to earn a

whole load of money, as much as all Mr. Murray has, and I'll buy you ten new dresses, of all colors, and I shall buy mother a dress and a hat just like Mrs. Britt's best one, only with a much bigger feather; and I'll pay the mortgages and build a new mill, and a white house, with a porch in front, and carpets all over the floors, and a buggy for mother to ride in. Yes, I will!"

"Bless the child," said Eliza, tears coming into her eyes; "whatever put all that into your head?"

"Oh, I think of it often, when I'm playing, or go to bed at night, or sometimes when I'm learning my lessons—and then—I forget to learn my lessons, and I go to the foot, and the master says, 'Robert, you've been dreaming away your time.'"

"You mustn't do that," said Eliza, "you'll never get a deal of money, and be rich, unless you are wise and learn all your lessons. What are you going to buy for yourself, when you are rich?"

"Something," said Robert, carelessly; "I hadn't thought about that yet."

Robert was ten. His long curls had at last fallen under Eliza's reluctant shears; but now his hair was lying in great soft rings all about

his well-made head, and his erect figure was strong and well-developed ; not a child of his years in the district was so large and well-built as Robert. He was well on in his lessons too, full of life and enterprise, a leader among his playmates, a ruler, but not a tyrant. He could fight, and fought when he saw occasion. There was one day when as he and Pink reached school they fell into trouble.

Pink had a blue calico dress. It had seen a summer's wear, and had faded. Then, unhappily, a hole had come in it, and Eliza had patched it ; and, alas ! the new was bright against the old. Poor little Pink, that patch grieved her all the way to school. In vain Robert, putting his arm about her, strove to comfort her : "The patch did not look ugly." "The dress was clean." "Pink was pretty, anyhow." "No one would notice it." "Everybody had patches sometimes."

But Pink was still downcast, as by Robert's side she trudged to school ; Bop prancing along, now behind, now before them, and the twins pursuing an erratic course in the rear. But when the door of the school-house was reached, Jim Long bawled out : "Halloo ! Pink Allen, you've got a window in your frock !"

Pink simply dropped into a forlorn heap on

the grass, and hiding her crimson face on her arms, began to cry heart-brokenly. Beside her dropped the strap of books and the dinner-basket. Jim Long was twelve and sturdy, but Robert was upon him like a young tiger: he whirled him from the school-house steps out upon the grass; he dealt him a furious blow on his cheek, grappled him, flung him over, and kneeling upon him, began to strike him here and there, with little regard to consequences. The twins shrieked in chorus. Bop shouted for the master; some of the girls burst into tears; some of the boys roared: "Serves him right." "Give it to Jim Long." Others sang out, "Let him up, Rob!" "Quit, Rob." "The master's coming!" The master came. He pulled one boy off, and the other boy up; he took them each by the collar to the water-pail and washed both their hot, furious faces. Then he led them to the platform, rang the bell for school and order, and inquired into the rights of the case. Tom Britt stood up to testify, as a disinterested witness.

"Jim, I'm ashamed of you," said the schoolmaster, "but no doubt you spoke without thinking, and are sorry for it now. No boy with the least spark of a gentleman in him would insult a girl! Robert, is it not written,

'Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath'?"

"Yes, schoolmaster," said Robert, "but I was not avenging myself, but Pink. He may say what he likes to me, but no one shall make Pink cry."

"It is dangerous to be so uncommonly handy with your fists, Robert," said the master; "hereafter will you let Jim alone?"

"Yes, master—if he behaves himself," said Robert, calmly, fixing his steadfast, brown eyes on his preceptor.

The schoolmaster repressed a bounteous smile. "I want no fighting in my school. Refer ill-behavior to me."

"And be a sneak and a tell-tale, master? I'd rather settle him myself, please, sir."

"But I don't please," said the master. "I cannot have fighting. If I found you boys fighting, and was obliged to take a hand and thrash you, it would be unfortunate."

"Yes, master, so it would," said Robert; "but—I should have thrashed Jim first."

"Take your seats," said the master. "It is time to open school."

Mr. Murray gloried in this encounter. He met Robert one evening on the bridle-path to the chalet. The boy had been looking after

the Allen cow, which was given to straying. "Robert," said Mr. Murray, taking his hand, "you are now about ten years old, and I hear you are at the head of your class."

"Yes, sir; but it's easy, you know; it is not a hard class."

"And you can thrash any boy of your size, and more than your size too, I understand."

"So I can," said Robert, with modest gratification; "but I don't do it often. I don't love to fight."

"You will soon be a large boy, and then a young man. What are you going to do in life?"

"I shall go to work at something as soon as I can, and make money. I want to make a lot of money."

"Yes. What do you wish to do with money?"

"I want to give it to father. The mill needs a lot of money to repair it. We need a house. The mortgage ought to be paid. Oh, we need so much money."

"And you'd be willing to do—anything for all this money, would you?"

"Anything I could do, sir; anything right. Father says there's lots of very dirty money in the world, made in bad ways. I wouldn't want that money."

"Perhaps I can put you in a good way to

have a deal of money, as much as I have—and I am a rich man, Robert. Would you like that?"

"Oh, sir! Oh, yes, sir!" cried Robert, his face aglow.

The dusk was falling an evening or two after, and Captain 'Zekiel Allen, in a moody frame of mind, was standing on the bank, where he could dimly see his mill-wheel. The children were all in the house peeling and cutting apples to dry for winter. Captain Ezekiel was unhappy. The mortgage was long overdue, and he was at the mercy of his creditor, who could at any time refuse the hard-earned interest and foreclose. The old mill was so out of repair that it would scarcely hold together. The voyages to Philadelphia were yearly less remunerative, the barge was very old, and, like the mill, needed refitting. There was little demand for sawing or grinding. The outlook was very dark for 'Zekiel and 'Liza and the five children.

Some one came behind him.

"Captain Allen, are you there? I wish to talk with you. Can we sit down somewhere alone?"

It was Mr. Murray. Captain Allen silently led the way under the mill, to that very place of cobwebs and rubbish where he had sacrificed his

bottle, long ago, to Robert, and laid his hand in unuttered covenant on that curly head. There were two empty nail-kegs there, and the men sat down. Captain Allen's heart misgave him. He had long feared mischief from Mr. Murray.

"Allen," said Mr. Murray, "I want to talk with you, and I am going first to tell you what I have never told hereabouts to any one, my story. I was left an orphan with some money. When I was a lad I had typhoid fever, and in the long prostration that came after I was freely given brandy and whiskey. It created a taste for liquor. Mine was not a constant thirst, a tippling, a daily sipping. But at times a strong craving came upon me, and I drank. I married. My wife was an orphan like myself, and lovelier than words can tell, a gentle creature, all heart. We had a child—a son—we were happy. The child was about a year old, when, one evening, in New York, I wanted to take him out with me on my arm, to carry him around after the shops were lit. My wife had a sprained ankle and could not go out. She objected to my taking the child. I had been having some liquor; she knew I might at any moment yield to my madness, and take more, and lose all knowledge. But I was proud of my handsome boy, and I would go out with him, to show him to those

whom I knew. I went out. At one in the morning I came in without the child."

"Where was he?" cried the Captain.

"I do not know. I was too stupefied to miss him or to answer questions. My frantic wife sent for the neighbors and for the police. It was noon next day before I came to my senses. Then I could tell nothing, for I could recall nothing. Search had developed nothing. Search has never developed anything. My watch and a wallet with a hundred dollars were gone. I had a vague fancy that the child cried, and I had given him these articles to play with. We bent every energy to the search, but never found any trace of him. My poor wife was prostrated. She lay on her bed, wasting to a shadow. She had but one word, 'My baby, get me my baby.' Hour after hour she moaned that plaintive plea. When too weak to utter the words, her big, sunken, sorrowful eyes turned in an agony of entreaty to every one who entered. I spared no pains. Even now the case is in the hands of the New York police, as it has been for ten years. At the end of a year my poor heart-broken wife died. I was an old man. My hair was white, my face was wrinkled, my shoulders bent, as you see. I gave up hope. To fly the face of all whom I had known, I came up here. By some

strange fatality, when all my home had fallen into ruins, my fortune throve. I make more and more money, but by no outlay of it can I find my child. Now, I have a large fortune, and I am prematurely old and broken, and where shall I leave my money when I die? I have seen only one heir whom I want—your Robert."

"Robert! You want to leave your money to Robert!"

"Yes; but I want you to give Robert to me. I can do for him more than you can. I can make him a gentleman, a rich man, a scholar—everything. It is not fair of you, is it, to stand in the way of his prosperity? He is not really yours; you have four; compassionate my loneliness, give the boy to me."

"Give up our Robert! Not mine! Yes; but I love him as well as any of the rest. Give you my boy, Mr. Murray?"

"I will do so well for him," plead the Superintendent.

"I'm bringing him up to be an honest man, and that's enough," said Captain 'Zekiel.

"When the boy is older—when he finds himself at a disadvantage, when he is wanting what he cannot have, and is hard pressed by poverty, he may wish you had done better for him by not rejecting my offer, Allen."

"It would break 'Liza's heart. She's as set on Robert as I am. And there's Pink; yes, and all the rest of 'em, Jerry and all, they'd never cease mourning if I let him go. To say nothing of what I'd feel."

"Yes, yes, I know. But here you are, times are hard, the mill is mortgaged for all it's worth, or more. Old Mr. Wick, who holds the mortgage, is past seventy; when he dies the heirs will wind up the property, and where will you be, Allen?"

"In the street, no doubt," groaned the Captain. He had been thinking those very thoughts by his wheel as the evening gathered before the Superintendent came.

"And you will have in Robert only one more to share your troubles. You can set him well out of them by giving him to me. I'll send him to college. I'll leave him all my property unless I find my own boy Paul. If I find him—though I fear, yes, I am sure I never shall—I'll give Robert ten thousand dollars, and take care of him, until he is twenty-one."

"I don't believe the boy would be willing—no, not for all that money," said Captain Allen.

"You should be willing for him, seeing it is for his good."

"To give up our Robert!" cried the poor foster-father.

"Come, Allen. See, now, I'll pay off the mortgage, and give you a thousand dollars, to repair the mill and build a house."

"You are trading on my poverty, and trying to buy my good little boy!" cried Allen angrily.

"No, I am not. You have cared for him five years and over. I offer you compensation for his education and maintenance. If I had picked him up when you did, no doubt by this time I should have spent a deal of money on him."

"He is not for sale," said the Captain, crossly.

"Don't look at it in that way, man," plead the Superintendent. "You are rich in four children of your own blood—I am childless. Think what a terrible history I have told you. Think of my daily agony. Think how wretchedly I lost my poor wife. Your wife is with you. It is a charity I beg of you. Give me the boy."

This moved the warm heart of Captain Allen. He laid aside his wrath. "I'm sorry for you, with all my heart," he said. "I wish I could say a good word for you. But I'm not the only one to speak about Robert. 'Liza has worked for him, made, mended, washed, cooked, done

without things for him, as she has for her own. I could not do anything unless 'Liza agreed, and I'm certain she'd say 'No.' Pink would pine to death over it."

"You think it over, and talk it over with Mrs. Allen," said the Superintendent. He rose from the nail-keg and stumbled his way out from under the mill, into the starry night. Captain Allen followed him, and stood listening to his horse's hoofs going up the road. It seemed as if they were already carrying Robert away. Then he entered the living-rooms. The little family, even the twins, were busy about the tubs full of apples.

"What's the matter, 'Zekiel?" said his wife, seeing his distressed face.

"I know," said Jerry, who had been unusually silent. "He's heard the news about old Mr. Wick."

"What news?" asked Captain Allen, sharply.

"He's had a stroke, and they reckon he's dying."

Eliza grew pale. She knew what that would mean to them. She dared not look at her husband.

Meanwhile, Mr. Murray, riding to his lonely chalet, did not fail to see that he might buy the mortgage of Mr. Wick, and then press the Cap-

tain by foreclosing it. But though a selfish man, and rendered morose by his sorrows, the Superintendent was not a malicious man. He would not be guilty of so cruel an action. He said to himself that he could still wait; some chance might yet throw the coveted boy into his hands.

After the children had all gone to bed—for Robert and Bop now shared a little room which the Captain had made off from the workshop, and a shabby little place it was, do the best for it that Eliza could—Captain 'Zekiel and his wife sat by the dying fire and discussed their ever-falling fortunes, and Captain 'Zekiel told 'Liza of the offer made by Mr. Murray.

"The mortgage gone, and a thousand in hand, 'Liza, we should be set on our feet."

"But we would not enjoy it," said 'Liza. "It seems as if the new home wouldn't be half a home without our Robert. Oh, 'Zekiel, I can't give him up!"

"And, 'Liza, you said he shouldn't stay, and did not like my bringing him. He was a Bad Bargain!"

"No, no, 'Zekiel. He has been a good bargain and a blessing. 'Zekiel, do you think we should give him up? What would the children do?"

"Let us all sink or swim together, 'Liza," said Captain Allen, laying his hand on his wife's.

"So we will, 'Zekiel. We won't give up our boy."

CHAPTER IX.

ROBERT COMES TO THE RESCUE.

No one of old Mr. Wick's relatives, not even his prospective heir, watched so anxiously the progress of his illness as did Captain 'Zekiel; no other one was so rejoiced when the old gentleman began to recover. On the first of January Captain 'Zekiel went to pay his half-yearly interest — a small amount, but how hardly earned!

"Well, 'Zekiel," said Mr. Wick, giving a receipt for the money, "I didn't think I'd be here to take any more interest from you. I made sure my nephy Jones would have sold you out by this time. But I may take your money for a number of years yet, 'Zekiel."

"I hope to goodness you may," said Captain Allen. The payment of the mortgage was a good fortune beyond even hoping for. The being allowed to pay the half-yearly interest and not have his ancestral mill sold away from him, reached even beyond the limit of Captain

'Zekiel's expectations. The Captain was not an enterprising, nor active, nor fortunate business man. Had he been offered something to do in the city at twice the amount of a modest living at the mill, he would have stood by Lal's Mountain. His wildest day-dreams never passed beyond a new white house with seven rooms, a veranda, and a little flower-garden, besides a renovated mill. His children might go forth in the world and make their way in wider spheres; the Captain wanted the old place for himself and 'Liza, where the children could come home to visit and bring their children to set their toy-boats sailing on the waters where the Captain's grandfather had first set a mill-wheel turning.

As it was, the Allen family, in spite of their poverty, managed to be very happy together in their tumble-down home. So one day went on very like another, and the children grew, and the Captain gathered together his interest money, and Mr. Murray waited, and Robert was thirteen. That spring the *Fair-Weather* was to go down the river in May. She had some lumber to take as well as the usual odds and ends of her trading expedition. The preparations were well under way when suddenly Mrs. 'Liza, the head and front of the household, fell ill. There had been a deal of

sickness in the district that spring, and Mistress Allen had overtaxed herself helping her neighbors. All at once, she who arranged all the family affairs, the woman-with-a-head-on-her-shoulders, to whom they all turned for direction, lay prostrate. She was unable to think, to project, to direct; her thin hands were tremulous, her mind wandered, fever scorched her veins.

The neighbors had always said: "Well, the Allens are so unlucky, the last and worst that can come to them, is to have something happen to 'Liza." And now something happened: Eliza was lying helpless in her bed. The loading of the barge stopped; Jerry was no longer able to offer proposals for new enterprises; the children stood about, awed and quiet or crying; the poor Captain, 'Zekiel, was as a man distracted.

There were so many ill, or aged, or just recovering from sickness in that sparsely settled neighborhood, that there was no one to come to help the Allens. The burly, unaccustomed Captain was left to be sick-nurse, while distress and alarm had rendered him more impracticable than ever. The doctor came. Mrs. Eliza was "all run down"; "she was overworked." "She needed careful nourishing." Among other

things she was to have beef-tea. Beef-tea! It was a new dish at the mill. But Jerry got the beef from Lacy when he went after medicines. The doctor had told them how to make beef-tea—but the Captain was hazy as to the instructions. Besides, he theorized if 'Liza needed to be strengthened, the tea should be rich; to his mind the fat was the best part of the meat—the Captain put plenty of fat in his beef-tea.

At last the potent dish was done. Mrs. 'Liza, in her room next the kitchen, had smelled the steam of the decoction, and was sure she did not want to taste it. But oh, she must. What! not take her beef-tea, when the doctor ordered it, and her Captain and the children were in such agony at seeing her ill! She must be heroic. The Captain poured his beef-tea, boiling hot, plenty of it, into a yellow bowl, and hurriedly advanced with it to the bedside while the children looked on.

It is a singular fact that, for some occult reason, the horniest of man-hands can never endure a hot plate or cup, with one-tenth the fortitude of softest woman-hands. Besides, the Captain, in anguish at 'Liza's situation, had quite lost his head. He distinguished himself by dropping the hot bowl, just as he got to the patient.

The greasy fluid was distributed over the clean white counterpane, and scalded one of the patient's worn, thin hands. The children shrieked; poor helpless 'Liza turned her face to the wall and incontinently burst into tears. The Captain tore his hair.

Then Robert rushed to the rescue. He saw that the Captain, the natural nurse of the occasion, was entirely incompetent, so he sprang in before him, tore off the counterpane from the bed before the soup had time to soak through to ruin the clean blanket; seized a dish and deftly mixed 'Liza's remedy for burns—flour, salt, water, in a thick paste—poured it into a towel, and bound up the burned hand. Then he ran for the other clean counterpane and spread it neatly over Eliza, put his father and the children out of the door, bade Pink put the soiled counterpane to soak in a tub of suds, drew the curtains, opened the window, shut the bed-room door, bathed Eliza's face and smoothed her hair, set a bunch of green leaves and white flowers on the little table, and returned to the kitchen, to investigate the remains of the Captain's cooking. There was still some broth in the little pot, and, luckily, the greasy portion had been spilled. Robert got a little china cup, a shelf ornament, set it on the best

plate, put in it one of 'Liza's six small silver spoons, her only "silver," laid by it one of her six napkins, laid on the napkin a finger of brown toast, put the rest of the broth, carefully seasoned, into the cup, and carried the refection to Eliza. "Your hand doesn't hurt now, does it, mother? Pink is washing the quilt in hot suds, and we will bleach it lovely on the grass. And here is some nice broth; and don't worry, I'm going to take care of you. I believe I know how to 'tend sick people."

So he fed 'Liza the broth and toast, shook up her pillow, and went out to inform his father that he himself was now head nurse, and that the kitchen stove should be set out in a little lean-to shed, and no one allowed to walk with shoes, or do work, above the sick-chamber, and the children had better go to school, and leave the place quiet. "And, father, you'd better load up the *Fair-Weather* and make the trip, and take Bop and the twins with you. Jerry can see to the work, and Pink and I will take care of mother."

"But, Robert. Your mother—I can't go—indeed; suppose your mother should die, while I'm gone." The Captain's eyes were wide and dim, with the horror of the thought for him the loss of Eliza would end his universe. "It's

wrong, Robert, all wrong. Women ought never to die first. Women know how to take care o themselves; but I—but men—can never get o alone." And Captain 'Zekiel leaned his head on the tall blue-painted pump, and tears ran down his rugged face.

"Don't, don't, father," plead Robert. "She won't die; oh, I know she won't die. We'll take such care of her. If the barge don't go, she'll worry, you know, about needing the money, and all—and she'll be quieter if Bop and the twins are away. She'll be well by the time you come back. Indeed, she'll do better if she sees everything is going on reasonably."

Indeed, when questioned by Robert, 'Liza expressed her strong wish that the Captain should take the younger children and make the trip. So the loading of the barge was completed, and as Robert showed himself an admirable nurse, and the patient did not get worse, the Captain agreed to make his voyage. In truth, he cheered up a little; and seeing Robert deftly brushing his mother's hair, the evening before the *Fair-Weather* was to leave, the Captain even ventured a jest. "'Liza, he isn't such a Bad Bargain after all; and. 'Liza, he does your hair a deal more softly than you did his, that first evening, you know." For there had been no effort

made to deceive Robert as to his place by adoption rather than by birth. Eliza was a sensible woman. "He sees we love him, and do our best for him," she said, "and if we tried to hide from him that we found and adopted him, he would remember a little of the truth, and the whole of it would come out in some unpleasant way to hurt his feelings. It is best to be frank about it from the first." So as soon as Robert was old enough to understand, his coming to the mill was freely spoken of.

Well, the *Fair-Weather* went down-stream, for the first time in fourteen years, without Eliza. The poor Captain was heavy-hearted as he kept looking back, until the bend in the river hid his home from his eyes. Then, when the barge was out of sight, Robert and Pink hastened in to their duties of nursing and housekeeping.

All was very quiet at the mill. The steady creak of the wheel was a monotone to which they were so accustomed that no one noticed it. The bees in the row of hives, which was one of Jerry's industries, hummed at their work, and no doubt got ready for swarming; Pink borrowed Mrs. Britt's cook-book, and made beef-tea, gruel, panada, and toast water, and chicken broth, by rule and letter. The doctor

said there was not a tidier, quieter sick-room in his rounds than Robert kept, and Robert had always something encouraging to tell, some new attention to offer to cheer the invalid. But 'Liza kept her bed, and was weak and unable to rally. She had had a life of hard work and many cares, this poor woman, and her system had lost tone.

The Captain made the shortest trip on his record. He was in a fever of haste to get home. He pushed his barge down-stream or up-stream until late at night. He made short stops. What use was it to stop, when he had not his poor 'Liza with him to make pleasant the visits of friends? He thought sometimes of Mr. Murray, and his sad tale of losing his wife. Poor man, however did he endure such misery! Had it been cruel to refuse to console him with Robert? But then, if Captain 'Zekiel had given away Robert, who at this crisis would have been the indefatigable nurse of Eliza, perhaps to the saving of her life?

So the Captain hurried his expedition. It is a pity that he did not take a little more time to it. He missed the advice, the business perspicacity of Eliza, her ultimatum on each venture. He was duller than ever; indeed, he had not by any means recovered the head he had

lost when he spilled the soup and burnt the patient.

Unluckily, also, the Captain did his little trading with new parties. The old acquaintances had sold out to new firms, who saw in Captain 'Zekiel only a man uncommonly easy to overreach in a bargain. The incapacity to reckon, the dubiousness as to whether Eliza's method was to multiply or divide, was not an occasional but a chronic state with Captain 'Zekiel. Unhappily, also, it made little difference whether he did multiply or divide; by his management the result of either method was painfully likely to be about the same.

Well, he traded, he got rid of his cargo, and he had something in lieu thereof; and, aided by a strong wind, he got up the Schuylkill in much better than usual time. But all the way up black care sat on his broad shoulders, and whispered that he had made a very disastrous trade, and that he was wofully behindhand, and that when his bills were paid he would be short of money for the June interest, and—alas, Captain 'Zekiel!

He reached home, and Eliza was still in bed. Her fever was gone, but she was weak, white, wan, without appetite or energy. She roused a little to inquire the result of the voyage. The

Captain's fortitude was at an end. He sat by the table, his head bowed. "I've made a mess of it, 'Liza! You've got a head, and I haven't. I can't do a thing without you! There's all the money I brought back; and, though I've counted it a hundred times, I can't see that I have made above a dollar or so over the expenses."

"'Zekiel Allen, is that all the money you got? Is that all you brought back?" cried the dismayed Eliza, her quick eye reading the sum total at a glance.

"No," said Captain 'Zekiel. "Mr. Kemper gave me as part pay for the honey and dried fruit and cheese fifty butter-tubs, ten-pound and twenty-two-pound tubs, which he says Snell the butter-dealer will give me ten cents apiece for, and that's—how much, 'Liza?"

"Nothing!" said Eliza, solemnly. "Snell was buried the day after you left. You've got those tubs on your hands, 'Zekiel. What else?"

"And, instead of money on the hams and popcorn and knit things, the new man got me to take a barrel—a hundred and seventy pound barrel—of brown sugar."

"'Zekiel Allen! When would we use a barrel of brown sugar, especially as we are not likely

to have anything to eat it with or a roof to keep it under!"

The Captain groaned. "And I felt so bad about you, 'Liza. I wanted to get you something, and I got you a gown-piece," and the Captain undid a brown-paper parcel and showed his gown-piece.

It was a canary-colored plain delaine.

No doubt the Captain was color-blind, just as he was born without a capacity for arithmetic. Possibly the fifty butter-tubs, the barrel of sugar, and the canary-colored gown would have killed a weaker woman. Mrs. Eliza was overwhelmed for an instant. Then she revived from the shock. It acted as a tonic upon her. "'Zekiel Allen! I see plainly if I allow myself to die, you and the children will be in the county-house in six months. You weren't born to manage for yourself, 'Zekiel. Well, I won't die! Robert, make me a cup of tea and give me a soft-boiled egg; I must get well. If I don't, what will become of you?"

Joy! joy! The voyage had been one disaster, but Eliza was going to get well! Whenever did this admirable woman fail to keep her pledged word? Captain 'Zekiel came out of the depths, a smile passed around the family, playing from face to face, as one hill after another

catches the illumination of the morning sun. Robert and Jerry retired to the family council-chamber, the rubbish-place among the under-pinning of the mill. Robert had ideas which he wished to have tested by the practical Jerry.

They seemed to be good ideas, for they stood the scales of Jerry's judgment like full-weight gold coins.

Robert returned to the bed-room and sat on the foot of 'Liza's bed.

"Mother! I wouldn't mind about the dress; you can dye it a beautiful drab, and it will be so nice."

It is always well in driving a wedge to put it in thin end first. This was Robert's method, with his plans.

"So I can," said Mrs. 'Liza.

"And, mother, I'll tell you what we'll do. The mountain is going to be just covered with berries. Jerry says the raspberries and black-berries will be just by the bushel. And our orchard never had such a lot of apples set. Say, mother, you get well, and we'll all pick the berries, and bring them to you, and we'll have a fire out of doors, and the big brass-kettle on, and that barrel of sugar, you know, we'll boil it into jam. All the folks say there never was jam like yours. We will make raspberry jam, and blackberry

jam; and the wild plum-trees are loaded, we'll have plum jam; and then we'll go for the apples, and make your splendid apple-butter; and we'll fill every one of those fifty tubs with jam and apple-butter, and in October we'll take the barge down to Philadelphia again. Jerry says we can have at least twenty-five pounds of honey, and it's a nut year, and we can take barrels of nuts, and we'll take down the fifty tubs full of jam and apple-butter, and Jerry says we can have two firkins of fall butter, if we are careful of the milk, so we'll make a good load, and—mother, we won't sell to the stores. Jerry has been reading about trade, and middle-men, and all that. You'll fill our sample-glasses of jam and honey and jelly; we'll turn our currants all into jelly,—and I'll go straight to the big hotels with my samples for them to taste. I'll tell 'em how good the things are, and I'll sell out for more than the dealers give. Perhaps Mr. Murray knows a hotel-keeper or some one who has a great boarding-house, and he'll give me a letter, and you'll see I'll sell."

Eliza's energetic soul responded to this planning. She came out of her sickness a new woman. Captain 'Zekiel rolled the unaccustomed burden of thinking off his shoulders and betook himself to working on well-planned lines.

Beans and pop-corn grew for the autumn trip; the Captain and all the children gathered fruit from dawn to dark all the fruit season; Jerry made lye, and soaked and scoured the tubs as white as snow. Eliza boiled jam and jelly and apple-butter in their season; she also dyed the canary-colored woolen, and made a new dress for the autumn trip.

Up above Captain Allen's mill is the finest trout fishing of Schuylkill County. There is also some of the most entrancing wild-wood and stream scenery. The summer before Mrs. 'Liza was ill, an artist and an angler had come up there together, and had concocted glowing and illustrated articles about the locality for a leading magazine. A fashion had been set, and, in August, up came in detachments of two and three, anglers and artists, and made a camp on Lal's Mountain. In their corduroy knee-breeches, their leather leggins and flannel shirts, they scoured the neighborhood.

Jerry need take no chickens, eggs, or butter to Lacy; his market was at the door. Eliza's services were enlisted for making pies, biscuits, bread, and washing fancy flannels. Captain 'Zekiel was kept busy,—now mending this, now making that; or, again, building sheds for the camp. Jerry was called upon to take the place

of a recreant cook who got drunk and was discharged, having nearly set the camp and the woods on fire. And Robert was in constant demand. Would Robert guide them here or there? would he take the Britt boat and go to Lacy for groceries? would he bring their mail? would he be drawn for a "Boy bathing," a "Boy angling," a "Fairy peering through leaves," "A Satyr playing on pipes to a bird"? would he be painted with Pink for the "Gipsy children"? would he make them some fishing-flies? Robert was ready to do all and everything. The legs, which 'Liza had warned him would be "worn off" watering horses, were good for any demand for exertion. He was always cheerfully on hand. The Captain and 'Liza did not begrudge his services to the strangers. None of them considered whether he would be paid. They were generous,—these people; ready to spend and be spent for others, according to their ability. It was Eliza's frequent observation:

"We are poor; we cannot give as some can; but we can do. We can help, if we cannot make presents, and all who live in this world ought to be ready to help their neighbors."

So Eliza herself was always ready to go and give aid where sickness, death, or extra work

made occasion for her services, and her children were all trained to be helpful.

The summer which had begun so ill passed more swiftly and joyfully than any summer for years. The Captain and Eliza and Jerry all made some money. When October came the anglers and artists were gone, but going they left a little packet at the mill for their willing factotum. Robert found in it a new pocket-book, and therein three ten-dollar bills. Oh, joy! He looked at them in ecstasy. He devoured them with his eyes. He ran and gave one to Eliza with a hug; he gave one to Captain 'Zekiel; he gave the third to Pink. Then he stood and contemplated his family, each holding a strip of green paper, as the farmer's family in the "Vicar of Wakefield" each held an orange.

Then the barge *Fair-Weather* was loaded up, and made a trip, and Robert sold his jams and jellies for a good round sum, and the Captain shook his big head and said, "Hah! That sugar-barrel was not such a bad bargain!"

CHAPTER X.

ROBERT PROVES HIMSELF A HERO.

THE October voyage of the barge *Fair-Weather* having proved a success, the Captain, Eliza, Jerry, and Robert counted up and combined their summer earnings, and found themselves better off than they had been for years. The exhausted wardrobes were replenished, and Eliza rejoiced in making much-needed new bedding, and in buying some new crockery. The interest money for the whole year was ready, and Captain 'Zekiel even went so far as to say to his wife, "'Liza, do you suppose, if we had some more such summers, we could repair the mill or build a new house?"

Eliza shook her head. "It would take a many such summers to do either; and then, of what use would it be when we are under such a mortgage and liable to be sold out any day? The time is coming, 'Zekiel, when we will have to leave Lal's Mountain, and I don't know where we shall go, or what money we shall have to take us anywhere."

"Don't be down-hearted, Eliza," said 'Zekiel. "I make sure we'll have better luck than you expect. It is a long road that has no turning. The Allen fortunes have been down-hill for two generations; it is time now that they began to come up. In my mind's eye, Eliza, I see a white house, with seven rooms and a porch, on that level spot a hundred yards above the mill. We would leave the great chestnut that is there standing, so as to shade the veranda, for you to sit in comfort summer afternoons. I think I see the old mill repaired and doing more business than ever, for there is business in the county, still, in our line, 'Liza, if we only had the machinery to meet it."

"Well, 'Zekiel," said Eliza, with a sigh, "there is no harm in seeing these things in your mind's eye, if it gives you any comfort to do so. And I suppose the Lord knows what is good for us, and will let us have all that we ought. There's a verse, 'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.' We seem to have borne it, not only all our youth, but our middle age pretty well through, also. But I remember it is in 'Pilgrim's Progress' said, that he is happy who has his best things last."

"Perhaps we will, Eliza," said Captain 'Zekiel. "Anyway, don't you be down-hearted.

Things might be worse. You might have died when you were sick, last May, or Mr. Wick might have died, and Jones might have foreclosed the mortgage."

The Captain and Eliza talked in this fashion, when they sat in the kitchen during the winter days, when there was no work in the mill, the children were all up at the red school-house, and the sun, shining across the snow, filled the kitchen with light. Eliza sitting near the window, sewed on her new sheets and pillow-cases; Captain 'Zekiel behind the stove, made corn-husk mats for sale; and Jerry carved canes and porridge-sticks, for which he found a market when the *Fair-Weather* made her trips. Also Jerry and Mrs. 'Liza were making two notable rag carpets. "If we never have a house to put them in," said Mrs. 'Liza, "we'll sell them for money to help us move. It is well to be ready for whatever happens."

The house nearest the mill belonged to young Nelson Britt. It was built in two low stories with an attic under the high peaked-roof. The attic ran across the whole top of the house, had a window in each gable, and was divided into two large rooms with a passage-way between them where the stairs came up. The windows of the attic were set in sashes that swung in-

ward on hinges. The Britt family was large, and besides the parents and children, there was an old hired man, and a young married woman of the neighborhood, who that winter helped Mrs. Britt with the work, for the sake of a home for herself and young baby, her husband having gone to Texas to prepare for their settlement there.

About nine o'clock one cold February night, when all the Britt family were in bed, some late passers-up the road discovered that the house was on fire. An instant and great uproar rose in the small settlement, and men, women, and children rushed to the scene of disaster. The house was old and all of wood—water was not to be had, as all things were frozen up. The Britt family got out their children as fast as possible, and half stupefied with smoke, the men came down from the attic, dragging the young woman, who between sleep and suffocation, was not fully conscious until she was in the sharp, open air. Then with wild shrieks she realized that her baby had been left in the bed. The men had never thought of it ; she had not known what was going on until she was outside of the house, and already the single stairway was a sheet of flame.

"Ladders! Ladders!" shouted the men,

while the poor young mother, screaming for her child, was held back by the women from flinging herself back into the burning stairway. "Ladders! Ladders!" But the Britts had lent their longest ladder, and the other was broken. Some rushed to the mill for a ladder. That was far too short. A cry of dismay told that the baby was doomed. Then a louder cry of surprise—for the window of the woman's attic room was flung open, and in it stood Robert with the baby in his arms. His course was evident. He had climbed up a great pear-tree growing against the opposite gable, kicked open the window of the man's room, groped his way to the other room, and found the child among the bed-clothes. Then, just in time to save himself and the babe from suffocation, he had pulled open the window. But the opened windows, creating a draught, had hastened the flames. They had rushed up to the top of the house and taken full possession of the landing and the pine partitions, so that the dark form of Robert, his handsome boyish head, and the little white, night-gowned bundle in his arms, were ruddily revealed against a background of flames. Moreover, the flames were devouring the room. He sat astride the window for a moment, while those below consulted and dashed

wildly about. Then as the red tongues reached out to lick him up, he dropped over the window ledge, and hung by one hand to the sill. It was an untenable position.

"Drop, boy! We'll catch you!" screamed the men. But the stentorian voice of Captain 'Zekiel rose over all. "My son! Hold on!" The distance was a long one, the ground was frozen like rock. If Robert fell and was not caught his case was hopeless.

"He can't hold on!" cried the women But Robert ducked his head, and the next instant was holding by both hands. He had seized the baby's clothes by his teeth, and thus held the child, resting against his upward strained arms.

Almost every one has at least one chance in life to show what is in him, and come grandly to the front of his fellows. This was the chance of the strong Captain 'Zekiel. A few things had been carried from the burning house,—among them a large table. As soon as he saw Robert at the window the Captain took in the situation, and sprang to drag forward the table. When he cried "Hold on!" he was setting it in place. "Hold it firm!" he said, and the crowd sprang to brace it on all sides. "Britt and Peters! Up here! Clasp together! Brace yourselves. Bear my weight." And Captain

'Zekiel had the two strongest fellows of the hamlet locked together, and was up upon their shoulders, and standing firmly, reaching up to his full height cried, "Drop now, my son!" Robert, at the very end of his strength, dropped like a shot. The men swayed, but did not fall. Robert fell into the Captain's arms; the Captain bent forward and set him on the table. Robert bent forward, and laid the rescued baby in the outstretched arms of its frantic mother. And then the roaring huzzas of the men, and the shriller acclamations of the women, voiced their approval of The Captain's Bargain.

"I vow that's a splendid boy of Allen's," said Deacon Britt, next morning at breakfast, to the schoolmaster. "That was bravely acted last night. He ought to have something done for him."

"The time may come to do something for him," said the master, "if it does not happen, as seems to me to be likely, that he does all that is needed for himself, and something for other people. But let us not spoil the spontaneous beauty of his present deed, by talk of reward. Let him have, for a time at least, that best reward, the consciousness that he thought wisely, acted bravely and promptly, and saved a human life."

In truth, Robert seemed to plume himself very little on his action. "It was easy enough to climb the old pear-tree," he said, "he had climbed it lots of times, and got into the attic window by it too, when he was playing with the Britt boys. He saw that the baby had been left, almost as soon as the mother saw it, and he couldn't help but see the only way to get at it in time. He knew his father would manage some way to get him down from the window."

In spite of this lucid explanation of the affair, Robert was the hero of the winter, and the absent father of the rescued baby wrote that if Robert would come to Texas, he would go halves with him in any place he succeeded in opening up for a home.

That was a hard winter, the severest for years. The snow lay deep upon the hills—thawed much in January, filling the creeks, then a heavy freeze came on and converted the streams into almost solid beds of ice, and more snow piled up on the hills. Then, all at once, in the last week in March, came south winds blowing softly, and suns that seemed hot enough for May, so that the streams would be flushed to their brims when the storming waters uplifted and rent the masses of ice. In the joy of warm air, sunshine, grass growing hourly green, and blue-

birds and robins flitting about every bush and tree, every one was out and busy. The barge *Fair-Weather* had suffered from the winter, and the Captain, Robert, and Jerry were busy repairing both it and the mill-wheel. It was Saturday, and the children were all home from school. The creek was very full, and blocks of ice were sailing upon its swollen, tossing surface. The Captain was in the mill selecting some lumber; Jerry and Robert plied saw and adze on the bank; Bop and the twins careering about, leaped now upon and now off the *Fair-Weather* as she was moored to the bank.

"Children," cried Eliza, "come off that boat. If you fall over, you will be drowned."

Bop obeyed, but the twins were the children of the family who occasionally ventured disobedience. At this instant the demon of rebellion took possession of them. They danced on the deck, and did not come. Eliza was laying out clothes to bleach on the grass. She looked at her recreant offspring.

"Pink, go bring me those twins. I shall tie them up until they learn to come when they're called."

Pink jumped upon the *Fair-Weather* and set out to catch or chase on shore the naughty

twins. But at that minute a wild roar was heard; the creek tossed tumultuously; the ice-gorge had given way with a rush; an avalanche of ice and water swept down against the *Fair-Weather;* her old cable broke; she swung from shore. Eliza shrieked for the Captain. Jerry dashed toward the bank, but experienced the disadvantages of a wooden leg,—his leg stuck in the soft sod and held him fast. Robert not being blessed with a wooden leg, cleared the distance and flung himself upon the *Fair-Weather's* tiller, which had just been repaired. The Captain appeared, Jerry got his leg out of the hole, Eliza and Bop ran to the brink. The *Fair-Weather* was out in the middle of the stream and sweeping toward Lacy faster than she ever went before.

"I'll take care of them, mother," shouted the young captain of the suddenly improvised expedition, bending to the tiller to keep his craft amid-stream.

The wicked twins, thus promptly brought to judgment, dropped themselves on their faces on the deck, and their wails pierced the heart of their lately wrathful mother. Pink looked at Robert.

"Put all your strength on the tiller with me, Pink," said Robert; "you and I will sail this boat to Lacy,—don't be afraid."

Mr. Murray had just come up to the Mountain, and was nearing the mill on horseback. He saw what had happened, and, turning his horse to the stream, followed on the bank the course of the headlong voyage of the *Fair-Weather*. Young Britt had just saddled a horse to ride to Lacy. The Captain seized that without ceremony and dashed after the Superintendent. The creek roared and foamed above its banks; the ice-blocks hurled here and there; the clumsy, crazy old barge plunged along—the twins lying screaming on the deck. Bending all their strength upon the tiller were the bareheaded, handsome fourteen-year-old lad in his patched and shabby raiment, and little Pink, her auburn curls streaming out in the breeze and her thin cotton frock blown about her as she followed the motions of Robert's arms, and he kept his eyes steadily fixed as he steered the barge clear of the snags and rocks and débris that would have wrecked her crazy frame and flung all her passengers into the seething flood.

A new bridge had been built at Lacy. Would it stand the freshet and the ice-gorge? If it did stand, could Robert's arm guide the *Fair-Weather* between the great piers of the bridge? If he put her through safely, could he turn her

toward the bank, where the broadening of the river would greatly reduce the force of the current? These thoughts were in the heads of the two frantic men who rode along the bank prepared to fling themselves into the water, to rescue the children or perish with them if the poor barge went to pieces.

The twins sat up on the deck and increased the misery of the occasion by holding out their arms and wildly screaming "Father!" On they went. It seemed to Captain Allen and the Superintendent that it must be hours since they began to follow that barge down-stream. Other people came out to cry and wonder, and other men on horseback turned about and rode with them, and they knew that the strength of the boy must be nearly exhausted struggling with his unwieldy craft, and that the gallant little girl at his side, doing her best, was lending but small aid. They saw the twins, as if obeying an order, rise and lean also on the tiller. The children were now grouped together. The bridge was in sight. People began to throng the banks and the bridge. Some men hastily untied row-boats and got out oars and ropes to follow the barge. They were near the bridge. The water boiled under the arches in fury; the ice-blocks crashed against them and piled up on the banks.

Robert fixed his gaze steadily on the widest space,—the space between the piers.

"He'll make it!" roared some.

"He'll miss it!" shouted others.

The boy seemed to calculate marvellously well the force and bearing of the current. On, on, under! He had bent all his young strength upon the tiller, and through the arch, almost grazing the pier, went the barge; and then Robert bore for the nearer shore, where the widening waters went with less furious rush. Boats put out to help him if they might, but he got his craft out of the surge of the midstream, and then brought her round toward the cove and grounded the *Fair-Weather* at last on the submerged bank,—the poor old craft settling as if in relief upon the soft, muddy shore.

The boats were about them now. The men leaped on the deck. The proud Captain saw them shaking Robert's hands and patting Pink's tumbled head, and he and Mr. Murray rode into the water until it rose above their horses' knees,—they were in such haste to be a little nearer the rescued children.

Then the boats landed the little crew upon dry ground, and the *Fair-Weather* was made fast by cables, and no less than three carriages were promptly offered to convey the children

back to their distracted mother. And as Captain Allen drove out of town with his three children, and Robert mounted on the Britt horse rode close behind, with the Superintendent at his side on the roan, there was a deal of "Hooray!" and "Good luck!" and waving of hats to congratulate the young captain on the safe conclusion of his short and perilous voyage.

Mr. Murray remained to supper at the mill. He invited himself. Secretly, Captain Allen felt that it was not fair; he was jealous of the Superintendent's interest, and begrudged sharing with him the triumph and joy of the occasion. Captain 'Zekiel was ashamed of this feeling; he tried to hide it. After such a merciful deliverance of his family, it was an enormous sin to wish that lonely Mr. Murray should not share the joy. The Captain had heard a sermon preached on the two creditors, and he tried to rebuke the grudging of his heart by going under the mill and recalling the text of that sermon.

"O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, when thou desiredst me: shouldst thou not have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?"

Then he took himself to task, and assured himself that if he cherished such mean feelings,

he would one day surely lose Robert altogether —as a judgment—and serve him right.

After thus dealing with himself, he returned to the kitchen, where Eliza was hugging her four children in turn, having condoned the disobedience of the twins, and Jerry was getting their best supper of ham and eggs and fried potatoes, and Mrs. Britt was standing with tears in her eyes, and in one hand a great loaf of cake—which had just been baked for her own tea, but was brought over as an offering to Robert,—and in the other hand her one sole jar of pineapple preserves to further grace this festive occasion.

During the evening all the neighbors came in, one after another, and to all the Captain with growing joy told his tale. He could never be weary of describing how Robert had managed the *Fair-Weather*, how the boy had not been one whit afraid, how he had remembered every snag and every twist and turn, and what muscle he had exhibited! And he patted Robert's back, and held out his arm with pride in its development, and gloried in the possession of such a son.

Meanwhile, the unhappy Superintendent was consumed with envy. Why was not this boy his? Why could not he claim the little hero?

"Allen, Allen," he groaned aside, "you keep him here, and some day, if you would give him up, I could make a millionaire of him, perhaps."

"Would I give up a boy who has just saved all my family!" cried the Captain. "'Liza, you didn't think when I brought home such a Bad Bargain, that stormy night, that he'd save your three children from drowning, eh?"

The Superintendent clenched his hands. Why, why had he not been the one to rescue the little boy from relatives who were going to send him to the poorhouse? "Robert," he whispered, "I'll give you a watch to mark this day."

"Oh, no, please. I couldn't wear a watch when we are so poor, and father hasn't any," said Robert, flushing.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WOMAN WHO WENT ON A LONG JOURNEY.

THE *Fair-Weather* made a more orderly voyage in June, and returned in safety. In July the tourists of the preceding summer came back. Jerry was engaged as camp cook; Robert as before was constantly in requisition. The camp was on the creek, about half a mile above the mill, and on the opposite side, at an especially wild and beautiful spot. As there was so much going to and fro between the camp and the Allens' home, the young men of the camp asked the Captain to build a bridge across the creek, placing it just above the wheel, and extending from the creek side of the mill to the opposite bank. The bridge was made by setting four or five logs firmly upright in the stream-bed among the rocks, laying broad planks from log to log, and supplying the slight structure with a single hand-rail. For agile and steady-headed people it was safe enough, now that the creek was low for summer, and the Allen children ran across it with the celerity and security of cats.

There was a day in August when the schoolhouse congregation had their Sunday-school picnic. Everybody went, both small and great; it was the gathering of the year. This year the place chosen was five miles away, and the start was made early in wagons laden with children, baskets, and grown people.

Mrs. 'Liza and her children all went. Captain 'Zekiel did not go, he must stay to look after the little work at the mill. Robert did not go. One of the artists at the camp was painting Robert as "The Young Woodsman," and was in haste to get the picture done, so Robert had to spend the morning posing with an axe, and a log, and a tame squirrel, one of Jerry's numerous pets, perched on his shoulder while he fed it. Robert set off up to the camp with his usual bright face. "I'll come back at noon, father, and cook our dinner. I'll make you an omelette, just as Jerry makes at the camp."

The Captain was left alone at the mill. When the sun-dial near the bee-hives marked noon, the Captain had a visitor. It was not Robert. A big, bloated, red-faced, untidy woman came in at the mill door—and someway, when the Captain saw her, his heart sank. "Be you Capting Allen?" said the woman. The Captain nodded.

"'Long about ten year ago, last spring, April it was, you picked up a little boy on the roadside down in Lacy, and you fetched him home, and took care of him, didn't you?"

The Captain nodded again. Dumb terror gripped his heart.

"He's my boy, and I've come to take him away," said the woman with assurance.

"Your boy?" shouted the Captain.

"Yes; he's my boy. I wouldn't have left him so long, only I've had a dreadful run of hard luck. I was sick a long time, and out of my head—and in a hospital—and a poorhouse—and I'm one of them as never has no good luck happen to them. But now I've come to get my boy. Where is he? You just tell him that his mother, his dear lovin' mother's come to get him."

"His mother!" cried the dazed and wretched Captain; "you his mother? If you were his mother, why did you leave him? What did you leave him for, I say?"

"I didn't go to leave him, Capting," said the woman. "I felt mortal sick, and he was little and tired, and I says to him, 'Sit there, honey, till I come back.' And I laid out to get some medicine and a little glass of something to strengthen me. And I got worse, and out of my head

like, and I lost my way, and couldn't find where I left him, and I wandered, and—I got carried to a hospital sick—and so it went on ; and now, at last, I says, 'I must have back my boy, my dear, sweet, pretty boy,' so I found my way back, and inquired, and it was told me, Capting Allen of the mill had took the boy, and so I come up here to you, and much obliged I am to you, indeed—and not to trouble you any longer with him. Seeing he's mine, I'll take him along back with me to-day, so call him to go with his dear mother."

"You sha'n't have him," bellowed the Captain ; "he's been my boy this ten years. I'll hold him against the world."

"Is he bound to you ? Did you get papers made out ?" demanded the claimant, eagerly.

No ; the Captain had not gone through that formality. He had found the child, and kept him, and the boy had grown into his heart and life.

"He's mine," said the woman. "I can prove it. I mean to have him. He's coming with his dear mother. Who else will support me in my old age, if not my son ?"

"You forsook him. I've raised him. You are not fit to have him. You are drunken. I smell liquor on your breath this minute ! You

sha'n't have him. If you come up here thinking to get money from me for the boy, you're all out. I haven't any money; I'm as poor as Job's turkey, but I'll not give you the boy. We'll have the matter before the court. We'll see if the boy is to be taken from decent folks to be lugged off to the city slums by a woman like you!"

"I'll have him," said the woman, excitedly; "I will. Where is the boy? I'll tell him his dear mother needs him, and he must come and do for me like a good son."

Then over the Captain's troubled mind rolled the great horror of having this woman, this foul, leering, drunken creature, see the clean, simple, handsome, generous, loving boy, and claim to be his mother. What an awful revelation for the lad reared by the just, sensible, womanly Eliza, to be called son by this dreadful creature! He changed his tone; he must get her away before Robert came. Deacon Britt was the nestor and arbiter of the hamlet; he had been a justice of the peace; he was a firm friend of Robert and the Allens; he should give his counsel. "The boy isn't here," said the Captain, "he's away; but you come up with me to Squire Britt's, and tell your story, and give your proof, and we'll see how to settle it.

Come along quick, I'm in a hurry ; I've work to do."

But the woman was full of drunken cunning.

"I won't go until I see the boy. Go on with your work. I'll wait for him. What does a woman feel waiting to see her own dear, pretty boy after ten years, and she a good, loving mother as ever lived !"

The Captain clenched his hands and gritted his teeth. In his fury he felt like picking up a stick and cleaving the woman's head. "I'd sooner kill you than let you have him !" he roared in a transport of fury.

"A nice man you are to bring up a boy," cried the woman, who belonged to the unstampedable. "I want my child ! Where is my boy ! My son, my son, come to your dear mother !"

Alas ! the Captain, looking across the stream, saw Robert, joyous, running down the path toward the bridge. Beside himself with distress, he foolishly cried, "There he is—hush ! hush ! hold your tongue, I say !"

"Oh, there he is ; that's my boy, is it, running to meet his own dear, loving mother ?"

Robert's foot was on the bridge. "Robert," shouted the Captain, "stay where you are ! Do not come on this side of the creek !"

Robert was not one of those pleasing young people, who being told to do something, do quite the contrary, and then ask what the order meant. Nor did he belong to that other variety, who meet a command with, 'why' and 'oh, no' and 'I won't.' If his father said, "Don't cross the bridge," very good; Robert did not cross the bridge, though his foot was already on it. If his father wanted him to stay on that side of the creek, very good; he could stay there, why not? He sat on the grass, and taking off his old chip hat, let the cool breeze fan his heated face.

"I'll call him over," said the woman, angrily.

"If I tell him to stop where he is, he'll do it, if you call till you drop," retorted the wrathful Captain.

"Then I'll holler at him, and tell him I'm his dear mother as lost him, pitiful, and he's to come and take care of his dear loving mother."

"If you call one word at him, I'll shout to him to run back to the camp, and he'll go like a shot," retorted the Captain, purple in the face.

Oh, how he wished for Eliza or somebody to tell him what to do.

"Then I'll go over to him," said the woman. "I'll go over and follow him to the camp, or clear round the world. I'll have my son. A

pretty thieving man you are to keep parted a mother and her boy!"

She started for the wide back-door of the mill, on the threshold of which rested the first plank of the bridge.

"Don't go! Don't cross! Stop, woman, I say!" cried the Captain.

Not that he feared for her; his family crossed there dozens of times daily. It was Robert for whom he feared.

The woman went on. The bridge was narrow and high over the howling creek for an unsteady head. Moreover, for the part near the mill, the planks were wet and slippery, being constantly spattered with drops from the wheel. The woman had gone but a few steps when her feet slipped, her drunken brain reeled, her hand relaxed its grasp from the rail, and she plunged headlong into the rocky bed of the creek. The creek was low. The water, deeper where she fell, rolled her round once or twice and bore her into a shallow.

Robert, seated on the farther bank, saw a strange woman essay to cross and then fall. He flung himself to the rescue, a few strides, where the creek was shallow. A few swimming strokes in the middle, and he had reached the woman and lifted her head above the water,

Meanwhile the Captain had hurried down the other bank and plunged into the water below the wheel and came to the two.

"She's fainted, or something," said Robert. "She couldn't drown in that little minute in the water."

The Captain lifted her by the waist, her head hanging against his arms.

"Take up her feet, Robert," he said, "and we'll carry her into the kitchen."

Robert wrapped the ragged wet garments about her knees, lifted her feet as his father said, and they struggled up the bank with their heavy, dripping burden and laid her in the kitchen on the wide soft lounge which was Pink's bed at night. They took off her wet dress and shoes and stockings. Robert took a towel and rubbed her head, arms, and feet.

"Get mother's camphor-bottle, father, and bathe her face," he said, returning to his authority as chief nurse of the Allen home.

The Captain followed orders.

"She isn't dead; her heart beats," said Robert, "and I see a little quiver here in her throat. Father, the doctor goes about noon every day to see old Mrs. Long; go and see if you can catch him to come here and I'll keep on rubbing her."

The Captain hurried off in silence. He feared

to leave the boy alone with the woman, lest she revive and speak, but the whole succession of these events prostrated his understanding. He could merely do each thing as it came up. A doctor was needed. Well, he would call the doctor. Had he been the means of getting the woman into the creek? No; surely not. He had called to her not to cross the bridge. True, he had felt ready to kill her,—but would he have done it? Evidently no. He went into the water to save her.

Thus his brain ran on as he hurried to Mrs. Long's, and luckily found the doctor.

Robert, left alone with the wreck of humanity on the lounge, regarded her with horror. Her soiled, torn under-clothing, her bloated frame, the face set in unconsciousness, but bearing marks of years of drunken sin,—these sickened the boy, whose native refinement was great, and who had been reared in cleanness and innocence by Eliza Allen. He went to the blue chest, got out a clean sheet and laid it over the figure on the lounge. Then he got a brush and smoothed her hair and twisted it up as well as he could. Next he put a few drops of ammonia in water, and slowly poured them into the woman's mouth. This seemed to revive her. She opened her eyes and regarded Robert with a heavy stare

that seemed to see nothing. There were mists before her eyes.

"Brandy," she whispered, "give me some brandy."

"We haven't any," said Robert. "I'll make you some tea." Eliza had a little kettle over a lamp. He lit the lamp, put a few tablespoonfuls of water in the kettle, and hastily made some strong tea. He sweetened it, and began to feed it to her. She swallowed feverishly. Then said:

"Gin, boy; gin! A drop of gin, or brandy, or—or——"

"We haven't any; here, take this," said Robert, and he put a drop or two of ammonia into the tea. "Take this."

She took it, but groaned, and closed her eyes. Then Captain Allen came in with the doctor. The doctor was a skilful man, learned in accidents among the mines and lumber-camps of the county. He began to handle the patient, pressing here and there, lifted her eyelids, then raised her up. She turned white with a cry.

"She was only in the water a minute or two," said Robert.

"Pitched off the bridge, did she?" said the doctor. "Dizzy; she had been drinking. Who is she?"

"We don't know, we never saw her before," said Robert.

"She came into the mill—she wanted to cross the creek on the bridge, and I told her to keep off," said Captain Allen.

"What did she want? what did she say?" asked the doctor.

"She—wanted to see some one—on the other side," said the Captain.

"She is evidently a sort of tramp," said the doctor, "but tramps never come here; we are all too poor and honest."

"I know," said Robert; "she must have heard of the camp; they are rich there. She no doubt wanted to go there to beg. That is why she would cross the bridge."

"No doubt," said the doctor, and he went out of the door with the Captain; Robert followed them. "There is nothing to do for her, but I will leave an opiate in case she begins to suffer overmuch. She will last only a few hours; not past six o'clock, probably. Her back is broken. She must have struck a big boulder as she went under. Her legs are dead already, quite paralyzed. Let her lie where she is, as she is—to torture her by moving her would be cruel. I'll drive round by the poorhouse, and speak to the poormaster to come round here this evening

for the body." Then the doctor mounted his vehicle, which was a "buckboard" on a pair of stout, low wheels, and rode off.

The woman lay as if insensible. The Captain, still tossing in his mind these questions: "Had he helped on a death so opportune for him?" "Was wishing her dead, a method of killing her?" sat looking on for an hour. Then he could stand it no longer. "I promised," he said, "to get out boards for the young gentleman for a new shanty. I must go to work. You watch her, Robert. Don't be frightened if she talks queer to you, and says odd things. It will be raving, you know. She may mix you up with others. Don't heed her talk."

"Of course not," said Robert. But when his father was gone he watched the dying woman with a growing trouble. What a mystery was here! Now she was part and parcel of this world—soon she would be away from this world—but where? How, and how far was she to go? How would that other life move on? What kind of a life would it be? He lifted his head. The woman was looking at him. "Where is my dress?" she said; "what am I here for? I cannot feel my feet. I cannot move my legs. I want to get up. I have a long way to go to-night. You are coming with

me. You need not take any of your things, but go get on your best clothes, and come away quickly."

"You fell into the creek from the bridge," said Robert, "and father and I took you out; and we took off your dress and shoes. You hurt yourself—that is why you do not feel your legs."

"Are the dress and shoes dry? Bring them, and come, we will go off together. Rub my feet, will you, boy?"

Robert rubbed. She could not feel his touch. "Harder! Are you rubbing? Pinch them! Stick a pin in them! I cannot feel you touch me at all."

Robert bent over her, great compassion in his big, brown eyes.

"You are going on a long journey to-night," he said, "and no one can go with you; you must go alone."

"I won't go alone; I mean to take you," said the woman.

"You cannot take me or any one. Your journey will be far outside of this world, into the world to come. You are going to die. You are hurt, and in a few hours you will be dead. Your feet and legs are dead already. You are going out of this world to stand before God."

"I don't know—anything about God," said the woman.

"But you must meet Him to-night. And He will ask you what you did in this world; and if you have done evil, He will be angry with you, unless you have repented. Now is your time to repent and say you are sorry, and ask God to have mercy on you. There is no minister here to talk to you. The schoolmaster is away. There is no one to pray for you; but if you have done evil, say you are sorry, for you are going to die."

"You seem a kind boy," said the woman. "And you pulled me out of the water, did you?"

"Yes; never mind that; think,—are you ready to die?"

"I wish—you'd tell the man to come here,—I want to say a word to him," said the woman.

Robert went up into the mill.

"She wants to see you."

"What has she been saying to you?" demanded the Captain.

"Nothing. I told her she was going to die, and she wants you."

"Robert!" cried the Captain, eagerly, "go stand on the middle of the bridge until I call you!"

Having thus provided for getting Robert out of earshot, Captain Allen went to confess his penitent.

Robert stood a long while on the bridge, waiting like the "boy on the burning deck." In truth, Captain Allen only remembered to call him, when the woman seemed to be in great agony and he did not know what to do for her.

Robert thought of the opiate, and, as the doctor had said it was the only thing to give her, he administered it freely, and repeated the dose. The woman sank into unconsciousness. Robert saw that Captain Allen was very pale; his eyes were sunken; beads of sweat stood on his brow. He sat by the table, laid his arms upon it, and his head on his arms. The heavy breathing of the woman sounded through the room. After a time there was a rattling sound.

"She is dying!" said the Captain. "I wish she had never come here!"

He rose and put his arm about Robert.

"She is dead."

He led the boy out of doors. At that minute a wagon drove up with the poormaster and the doctor in it, and a pine coffin with a long, coarse, white shroud. They went in and wrapped the stranger's body in this garment.

So it happened that Eliza and her four children coming home from their pleasuring saw several men carrying a heavy coffin out of their kitchen. All this tragedy of death had happened while they were having a picnic on a summer's day.

But from the hour the tramp-woman crossed the threshold of his mill, Captain Allen was a changed man. He no longer had a jolly laugh and a genial word for every one. His appetite failed; his sleep was broken; his face was full of gloom; his words were tart. He no longer deferred to the opinions of the woman-with-a-head-on-her-shoulders, but contradicted and dissented from her regularly, as if he felt that between her views and his there must be some great difference. At night his dreams were frightful.

"You are going to be sick, 'Zekiel," said 'Liza, "and I do wish you'd take some medicine. That tramp-woman dying here has over-set you completely. Robert did not take it as hard as you do. You always were a man of great feelings, 'Zekiel."

"Robert is only a boy. Boys don't realize things, 'Liza."

"Well, you need to do something for yourself or you'll be down sick. You mutter and toss all night. Last night you dreamed you had

killed that woman. The other night you dreamed that you had put Robert down a well; and not long ago you dreamed you had buried him alive. I told Jerry yesterday we'd have trouble yet with you if you did not take heed."

"I wish, 'Liza Allen, you'd not talk about me to any one."

"I'll talk about you to the doctor if you don't get better right soon, 'Zekiel," said the resolute Eliza.

CHAPTER XII.

VI ET ARMIS.

"WHAT is wrong with you, father?" said Pink, following her father into the mill one day, and laying her hand on his arm.

"Nothing! Why do you think anything is wrong?" he cried.

"You are so different, father. You are tart to mother; you boxed the twins' ears; you scolded Bop for making a noise; you find fault with me; you speak cross to Robert and Jerry. We never knew you to do so before. Father, is the mortgage foreclosed, and you do not like to tell us? Or is there some other debt? Must we leave the mill? Do tell me, father. You are so changed, and we are all so unhappy. Until now, though we are poor, we have been very happy." Tears were in Pink's eyes.

"There is nothing wrong. Don't bother me," said the Captain, stubbornly. But Pink's words pursued him. He could not work. In the mill Jerry and Robert seemed to regard

him anxiously. He went into the garden. He saw Mr. Murray coming down the road and dismounting at the mill. He noticed how pale and sad Mr. Murray looked. He was more bent than ever; he seemed haggard and feeble.

"I came to say good-bye," said Mr. Murray. "I am sick. I am going away. I shall go to Europe or to the East. Very likely I shall lay my bones there. What is the use of living, alone as I am? Ah, Allen, if you had only been willing to give me the boy, and with him a joy and interest in life, it might have saved me! But I cannot find my own boy, and this one is the only other boy I ever cared for."

He passed into the kitchen. Allen followed him. He felt that he ought to be very glad that the Superintendent was going away. Mr. Murray spoke to the rest of the family. Then laid his arm on Robert's shoulder and looked earnestly at him. "I should have a son like you, Robert! Then I might be content, and live to do some good. Well, good-bye; I leave to-morrow."

He shook hands all around. Captain Allen was so gruff, he was not even civil. Mr. Murray went out of the house. Then Captain Allen, as reluctant, but forced to the act, followed him to the door, and called out: "Mr. Murray—

won't you—don't you want to stop to supper?"

"Thank you, Captain. No."

The Captain came in growling. "Some folks won't take a chance when it's offered 'em. They won't give other folks a chance. He needn't say I didn't stop him."

The family sat down to supper. "I think poor Mr. Murray won't live long; my heart ached for him," said Eliza.

"I can't bear to see him so unhappy," sighed Pink, "I like him so much. I can see his eyes now."

Robert looked at his plate in silence. He could not eat.

"Boy, eat your supper!" cried the Captain, loudly.

"I'm not hungry, father. Seeing poor Mr. Murray has taken away my appetite," said Robbert, gently.

"Eat your supper, and don't be a fool!" cried the Captain.

The family held their breaths in astonishment.

Captain Allen pushed away his plate, and tramped out of the kitchen. He went to that rubbish place under the mill. Long ago in that damp, dark corner he had fought a moral battle, and won a victory. Once more the Captain was in sore conflict.

Jacob wrestled all night at Jabbok. The earth is full of the scenes of unchronicled spiritual struggles and conquests. The Captain remained under the mill until nearly midnight. When he came in, Eliza alone was sitting up for him. She looked keenly at him.

"'Zekiel, where have you been so long?"

"Under the mill."

"'Zekiel, I don't know what has got hold of you."

"I'm afraid the devil has," said 'Zekiel, soberly.

"'Zekiel Allen! I wouldn't have believed it if any one had told me!"

"Neither would I, a year ago," said the Captain.

Again he tossed restlessly, all night. There are in earthly wars, victories that are so nearly defeats, that the conquerors are kept waking and watching on the hardly-won field, uncertain whether morning may not find the foe in possession. It is sometimes so in spiritual warfare, we tremble lest we may not find ourselves holding a hardly secured vantage.

The Captain sat down to his breakfast, but did not eat. He hastily drank two cups of hot coffee, then surprised his household by snatching his hat and rushing away from the

house. At this Eliza burst into tears, and wrung her hands. "I do not know what is coming over your poor father! He used to be as cheerful, hearty, and good-tempered as the day was long. Now he is as cross as two sticks. I know he is losing his mind. His worries have softened his brain. Oh, children, whatever shall we do if he goes crazy!"

The children had no plan of action to propose for so dire a contingency. Pink and the twin girl wept with Eliza. Bop's sturdy little fists were clenched in a fierce effort to play the man, tearless. Robert put his arms about his mother, and Jerry, clearing his throat vigorously, looked out of the open door. Meanwhile the Captain sped, as one pursued by the Avenger of Blood, up the steep path to Deacon Britt's. There he found the schoolmaster on the porch, having just finished his breakfast. The Captain called to him, breathless:

"Schoolmaster, I want you to come where no one will hear us talking. I have things to say to you."

The master led the way to the orchard, where the fruit was ripening red and golden in the autumn sun, and the dew lay yet along the grass. No one could come within earshot without being seen.

"Schoolmaster, have you seen Mr. Murray lately?"

"Yes. He looks very poorly; he is leaving to-day, on the train at eleven o'clock."

"Did he ever tell you his story, schoolmaster?"

"No. He once had a wife and child. They are dead. I know nothing more. He never speaks of himself."

"He spoke to me," said the Captain; "he told me,"—and he rushed into the Superintendent's sad story.

"Stop, stop!" said the schoolmaster, after a moment. "These are very private affairs,—meant only for you, as he confided them to you. You should not tell them to me, Captain. It is a breach of faith."

"I must tell you," said Captain Allen, "and you must hear me. Listen, I tell you"—and he went on with the Superintendent's story. "Do you not think, schoolmaster, that a man who lost his child in such a way, has no further right to him? What business had he to take the child out against its mother's wishes—to drink with his baby in his arms? He lost him by his own fault. He deserves to be lonely."

"Allen, Allen, that is not the voice of Christian pity. Where should we all be, if with God

there was no forgiveness of sins? I know your heart aches for that poor father who for all these years has vainly looked for his child. But unhappily your pity and mine cannot restore his son."

The Captain looked moodily on the ground. "If he is sick and going to die, it would do his son no good to be found by him; he would be with him just long enough to be spoiled—and then left an orphan. The Superintendent will not suffer much longer."

"I think grief is killing him, and joy would cure him."

"He's had his chance, and thrown it away," said Allen.

"Allen, he has greatly wished for Robert. Is it this that is on your mind? Are you feeling that you ought to give up your boy to him?"

"Schoolmaster!" cried the Captain, with violence, "Robert is his son. Robert is the boy he lost!"

"Allen, what are you telling me? How do you know it?"

"You know the tramp-woman that died at my house? She had come for Robert. She left him at the village. She came to claim him, she said he was her son. I wouldn't have given

him to her; but you know as she tried to cross the creek to speak to him, she fell, and that was her death. When she found—the boy was the one who told her, and he did not guess she had ever had to do with him—when she found she was going to die, she called for me and told me the truth. She said she saw the child in his father's arms sitting on a bench in Central Park. The child cried, and the father gave him his watch and his pocket-book to play with. The woman saw that the father was intoxicated and did not know what he was doing. Presently he put the child down on the bench, and said he would go and get him some candy. No one was near and this woman thought she would take the pocket-book and the watch from the child. But when she went near to it the child held fast to the things,—Robert always was a plucky one!—and she saw he had a ring on his finger, a gold chain on his neck, and a rich dress. Schoolmaster, I think children are pretty enough as they stand, without fixing them up like popinjays. Well, she was greedy, and thought she would take the child off so she could strip him, and then she would leave him somewheres, and she wrapped him up in her old shawl, head and ears, and off she went to a slum where she lived. But she found the

pocket-book had a hundred dollars in it, and her husband told her she would get ten years for stealing the child, and she had better get away with it. They thought if a reward was offered, if they had time they could fix up a story and be safe for the reward. So the woman took the midnight train for Philadelphia. Her husband, and a couple of boys they had, went there to her after a little, but there was such a hue and cry raised about the child they dared not say anything. They got rid of the money drinking, and sold all the things but a little shirt with the child's name on it, which the woman kept, hoping that some day she might hear of a reward for finding the child, and manage to obtain it. And she kept the inside case of the watch; she had to break it out before she sold the watch, for on the case is Mr. Murray's full name, and 'from his wife.' She kept those two things. Well, when they had a drunken fight the man, and his two sons, her step-sons, used to threaten to tell about her stealing the child. It scared her so that after about four years, she took occasion of her husband's being in jail, to go off and lose the child. She took him up here to Lacy, on a night train, left him on the road-side, and went off to Harrisburg and stayed six months. But this summer she

was in New York, and coming upon an old paper she found that 'five thousand dollars and no questions asked' was offered for the child. She made up her mind to come after him, and to say that he was her own. She thought she would find him in the poorhouse. She did not know Mr. Murray was up here; the child was to be taken to a lawyer in New York. She had fixed up a story about her sister having stolen him, and told her when she was dying, and given her the watch-case and shirt. But you see, schoolmaster, all her plans went wrong. When she found she had to die, she told me the truth, and—when I saw the watch-case I found on it the Superintendent's full name, and the whole story jibed with what he had told me. So, there it was. Robert is Murray's son."

"And you have not restored the child to the father?"

"He is my child," cried Captain Allen passionately. "I love him as well, perhaps better, than my own. There never was such another boy as Robert. He is our best comfort. It would kill 'Liza to lose him. Pink and Bop and the rest would break their hearts. We have worked for him; we have reared him; we have loved him. What right has Murray to him, I say?"

"And you did not tell Eliza?"

The Captain hung his head.

"Because you knew that Eliza's voice would speak with your conscience, 'Give back the child!' The Scripture provides for the return of the strayed ox, or ass, or sheep,—how much more for the lost child? If we may not rob our neighbor of his gold or his garb, how much less of his own flesh and blood? If we are forbidden to covet all else that he has, are we not especially to refrain from coveting his child? Allen, your course toward Robert was noblest charity, until it became foulest sin!"

"Must I give him up?" cried Allen in a voice of agony.

It was like the echo of the old cry: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?"

"It is hard, but you must do it, Allen. Have you been happy and contented keeping this to yourself?"

"No; I have been a curse to myself and my family."

"Come, Allen; there is no time to lose. Murray will be leaving soon. We must get up the Mountain to his home. Come, man, let us run for it. The sooner done, the better."

Through the orchard they turned straight up the steep side of Lal's Mountain; struck from the foot-path to the bridle-path,—up, on toward Mr. Murray's little lonely dwelling. Doors and windows were open. Boxes and bags and trunks were standing ready to be carried to the station. Mr. Murray was alone in his sitting-room, his face resting wearily in his hands. He hardly spoke as his guests came in warm and panting.

"Mr. Murray," broke out the schoolmaster, "you have often asked Allen here to give you Robert, and——"

Mr. Murray sprang up.

"Allen, have you had pity on me? have you changed your mind? have you come to give me that boy that I love like my own?"

"No, I haven't!" shouted Allen. "I don't give him, but you will take him. Every man takes his own where he finds it. Take your son if you must. He is yours,—the boy you lost, and there's the shirt he had on his little back, and there's the case of the watch you gave him to play with, and if you want another token, he had three vaccination-marks set in a straight line on his arm, and 'Liza says it is a born shame to spoil a child's arm like that."

Murray gazed stupefied at the watch-case,

and the bit of linen, sewn long before by his wife's fingers. Then as some prostrate serpent gathers itself together, erects itself, flashes fury, quivers, expands, makes ready for a spring, the Superintendent's form uplifted and expanded, his eyes blazed, ruddy anger mounted over his face, his despondent voice rose to loud wrath, and he turned upon Allen.

"My boy! you had my boy and kept him from me! you refused to give me my son! you heard the story of my loss and misery! you with your home full of children, robbed me of my only one!"

"Mr. Murray, Mr. Murray! he did not know," interposed the schoolmaster.

"And when did he know? When did he come by these tokens? When did he find out that the boy was mine?"

"When the tramp-woman died at the mill," said the Captain, like a culprit at the bar, "then I knew,—she told me. She had come for the boy to give him up to you or your lawyer in New York. She told me, and she gave me the things."

"That tramp-woman! A month, a whole month ago! a month that I have been dying by inches, a month that I have been eating my heart out! I was at your house even last night,

and you were dumb. I should have known the boy by his mother's eyes—by his mother's heart in him! You have never told me the truth about finding him, or I might have suspected. A month—a whole month I have been robbed of my child. You scoundrel! you villain! you kidnapper! you thief!"

After this outburst of gratitude, Mr. Murray dashed out of the room, flung himself on the roan that stood saddled ready to take him to the station, and down the steep path he went at breakneck speed.

Captain Allen and the schoolmaster were left alone.

"He has gone to carry off Robert," gasped the Captain; "I shall never see my boy again. Perhaps I deserve it. He called me scoundrel, villain, thief! I have felt all that this last month, schoolmaster. But how I have loved that boy, and I have lost him!"

"Come, Allen, let us hurry down to your house," said the master; "we may get there before he takes Robert off. We must try and comfort Eliza and the children. Bear up. You have done well. You have been a father to the boy. You yielded for a time to temptation, but you have conquered it. Come."

They plunged into the grass-grown path to-

ward the mill. It is on record that the schoolmaster made only two remarks on the way down.

First:

"The trailing arbutus is a most beautiful flower, but it is not half so beautiful as that flower of the soul—human gratitude."

Second:

"The Lobelia-fulgens is a very rare plant, but it is not half so rare as that plant of the soul—human gratitude."

While the schoolmaster announced these two particulars, Captain Allen said not a word. The two men strode along toward the mill, and, for the only time in his experience, the schoolmaster was missing at morning school, and the urchins assembled devoted the hours to "tag" and "leap-frog," instead of to multiplication-tables and spelling.

Meantime, Mr. Murray, filled with fierce emotions,—exultant joy at finding the long-lost son; triumph in finding him such an one as all could admire; wrath against poor Ezekiel Allen, who had for a month defrauded him of his paternal rights,—went wildly toward the mill to claim his own. Hope took possession of him; joy filled him; courage rose; life seemed to beat in his pulses with returning force.

He burst in upon the little family left lament-

ing by the Captain's hasty departure. Mrs. 'Liza, thoroughly miserable, had retired behind the stove with her apron to her eyes. Pink, whose little fingers were never idle, was monotonously knitting a stocking—now and then polishing away a tear with the blue woolen leg that depended from her needles. Robert stood by her chair, his face clouded and anxious. The twins felt in duty bound to be miserable, but they had seized the occasion of their mother's self-absorption to take a holiday, and had got into a corner to play "mumbledy-peg."

Jerry felt it indecorous to work while family misfortunes brought a sort of Sabbath of sorrow into the week. He leaned against the door-frame, and eyed his wooden leg malevolently. Bop had made an effort to bring order out of confusion by piling up the breakfast dishes, of which his mother was for once oblivious, but his efforts ended in sitting in his father's chair and leaning his round, red head upon the table. Bop's world seemed to have come to a sudden end. Into this silence and misery burst Mr. Murray, all excitement.

"My son! Where is my son? Robert, come to your father!"

He seized Robert and hugged him to his heart in a passion of love and joy.

"My son! my own son! my lost boy! Oh, why is not your mother here to have back her child! My boy! my boy!"

Eliza sprang up.

"Mr. Murray, what do you mean? Surely, Zekiel Allen has not given him to you?"

"Given him to me? No, indeed, Mrs. Allen; I take what is my own. I take the boy that you have cruelly and wickedly kept from me. What right had you to keep him, when I was pining and perishing in my sorrow? It was wickedly done. I should have thought a woman and a mother would have had more heart. Robert, my son, leave these people who have been defrauding us both of our just rights. Come, now, with your father, who will give you all the best that is in the world. Let us be off at once."

Poor Mrs. 'Liza, who had never heard a word of Mr. Murray's story, or of his lost child,—who had had no hint about the confession of the tramp-woman,—heard in amazement.

"Robert," she cried, "what does he mean? Has all the world gone mad at once?"

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. MURRAY BUILDS CARD-HOUSES.

"DON'T wait for any of your things, Robert," cried Mr. Murray. "You want none of them. I will give you all the things you want. The train leaves at eleven, it is now just on ten, we must be off. This is no place for you, my son; you are rich, you are a gentleman born; come away with me to your rights."

In fact, Mr. Murray was beside himself.

"Here's the Cap'n running down the hill!" cried Jerry.

"The schoolmaster's with him!" cried the twins; and conscious of truancy, slid under the big lounge.

"Oh, the schoolmaster will help us!" exclaimed Eliza; "he will not be crazy, like the rest of the world."

"My dear boy, why are you not coming?" said Mr. Murray to the astonished Robert.

The Captain, red, breathless, was in the kitchen.

"Father, what does it mean!" exclaimed Robert.

"I am your father. Don't call him father!" shouted Mr. Murray, unreasonable in his excitement, and resenting the habit of years.

"Father, tell me—am I his son?"

"'Zekiel, 'Zekiel, if you are not out of your mind, let us know what it all means. Is Robert to go away?"

"You are his son," said the Captain, hoarse and red-eyed, and looking at Robert, his lips trembling.

"'Zekiel, have you given our Robert away?"

"No, 'Liza—no, my poor woman, no; but Robert was born his son, and his father—means to take him."

"Certainly I do. The way you have kept him from me has been most outrageous! Robert, come along at once."

"Consider, Mr. Murray," said the schoolmaster, "that until now these good people have been true, kind parents to your child, and did not know of your claims—and you take him from them, suddenly."

"They knew it for over a month—for a month they have robbed me most shamefully."

"Sir—I never robbed you, and never knew of any claim that you had," said Eliza, indignantly.

"And only for a month," cried the master,

" has the Captain known. He has not told his wife. Mr. Murray, you are unreasonable and unkind. Mrs. Allen, the truth is this: Mr. Murray had a child who, when only a year old, was stolen from him. The woman who stole the child, alarmed at her deed, deserted him, four years later, in Lacy. Your good husband rescued him, protected him, loved him. The woman who had abandoned him came here, a month ago, to get him to restore to his father. She told the whole story to the Captain, and since then, he has kept it to himself, because he could not bear to part with Robert, and knew how you would all grieve at losing him. To-day, conscience has prevailed—and he has told the truth. Robert is without doubt Mr. Murray's lost son, and the father has the first claim upon his child. He must go with his father."

" So he must. I have lost him, and you have had him quite long enough. It is time the tables were turned!" cried Mr. Murray, still wildly nursing his grievances. " Robert, are you not glad to find the most indulgent, affectionate father in the world? Do you not love me, my son? Surely you will not rob me of your love. Come, let me get you away from those who have set you against your own father.

Bid these people good-bye, and come with me, my son."

For answer, Robert sprang into the arms of Eliza, hugged her with all his might, and bending his handsome head upon the little woman's shoulder, cried in unison with her crying. Pink seized Robert's elbow and held fast, as if she defied Mr. Murray, or all the fathers in the world, to take him away. The twins, crawling out from under the lounge, burst into shrieks and wails at seeing their mother and Robert weeping. Bop tried to be a man, crowded his fists into his eyes, and got behind his father; the Captain, dropping into his chair, bent forward and hid his face in his big, rough hands; Jerry, seeing the misery of the whole family, heartily, and without any thought of selfishness, remarked: "He wished he'd have been the one that turned out to belong to Mr. Murray, for it broke the folks all up to lose Robert." In fact, to Jerry's mind, leaving the Allens and the mill, even in favor of a rich father, seemed unmitigated misery. But for the sake of his benefactors he would have been willing to sacrifice himself. But no tragic parent was waiting for the one-legged and one-eyed orphan of twenty-five. Robert was the "Lost One Found," and Robert had to go. Mr. Murray was ready to tear

him from Eliza's arms. The schoolmaster interfered.

"Robert, you must go with your father. It should be your happiness to comfort him after all his sorrows. Mrs. Allen, let the boy go. Do not feel so unhappy; it will be for his good —and—he will come back to see you."

But here Mr. Murray, possessing himself of the arm of Robert, to which Pink had clung, remarked that, "They had had enough of him. He meant to keep him now that he had found him. They seemed to have no regard for his rights."

Eliza, kissing Robert, whispered, "Go, my boy. You must. Be a good son, as you have been to us. I will always be your mother. You will never forget us."

Robert was too dazed with the mutations of his state to resist or to remonstrate. He kissed Pink and the other children, shook hands with Jerry, bent his face to Captain Allen's downcast face, and said:

"Good-bye, father, good-bye. You have been the best father that ever was to me."

Captain Allen only groaned. Mr. Murray jealously remonstrated.

"Don't call him father. I am your father, and I shall be ten times better to you than ever he has been."

"No, you won't," said Jerry, angrily, "because you can't. 'Tisn't in nater to be a better father than 'Zekiel Allen makes."

During this remark Mr. Murray pulled his new-found son from the house, and bidding him mount behind him on the docile roan, rode off toward the station, without grace of a good-bye or a word of thanks to the protectors of his son. Robert, his eyes full of tears, kept his head turned toward his only known home, until a bend of the road hid it from his sight. Mr. Murray could only remember the Captain's error, in hiding for a month the truth about Robert. He recalled the times he had asked to have the child given to him, the times when Captain Allen had tried to keep the boy from attaching himself to him, and he reckoned all these times as within the period of the Captain's knowledge of the Superintendent's paternal rights. His anger, almost foundationless as it was, towered up and hid from him all his vast indebtedness to the Captain and his wife. Murray, yielding to a vice, had lost his child, and given him over to every possible misery. Captain Allen, finding the child, a poor pitiful stray, had fed, clothed, housed, loved, taught him; had given him name and family and friends; had sacrificed to him the very appetite that in

his father had been his destruction. Out of their poverty the Allens had maintained this lost child. Once Mr. Murray had offered a large sum if the child should only be given to him. He did not think of that offer now; he took Robert as his right. Mr. Murray had also offered five thousand dollars to any one who would restore his boy. Of that he did not think when he carried Robert away from his impoverished protectors. Doubtless it was because in the deep heart-feelings of the hour it was impossible for so poor a thing as mere money to enter. Even later it did not enter Mr. Murray's mind; he was filled with the feeling that Captain Allen had been his enemy, had usurped his place in his son's heart, had kept Robert from him.

They reached the train only a few moments before it left. When the whistle blew, and the car from the junction started for Lacy, then did Mr. Murray feel as if at last his son was restored to him, and belonged fully to himself. Every instant widened the separation between him and the Allens. He had no care, no thought for anything but Robert. His servant would, according to previous orders, care for the luggage at the chalet, and for the horse. Mr. Murray wished never to see Lacy again, and especially that district of Lal's Mountain.

The plan of his life was changed. He no longer thought of leaving the country. No; now he would stay and do well for Robert. Robert must be educated; Robert must be introduced to friends; Robert must be pushed on in life; Robert would inherit a good fortune; Robert must learn to love his new-found father, better than the people whom he had left; Robert's mind must be weaned from the past. Mr. Murray's heart sang but one song, Robert, Robert, Robert. Why had he not, by divine parental prescience, recognized his child, years ago, he asked himself. No doubt a mother's heart would have realized the tie which his nature had ignored. One minute he upbraided himself, the next the Allens.

At last they had left Lacy behind. Few people were in the car. Mr. Murray put his arm about Robert's shoulders, and drew him near to him. He took from his pocket two pictures.

"Here, my son, is your mother's picture, and yours, at the age when you were stolen from me. What a fool I have been not to recognize in you your mother's eyes and hair."

Robert looked at the picture. The lovely young face of his dead mother was very different from the plain, care-worn, mature face of Eliza Allen, but there was the same mother-

look in each. He felt sure that his dead mother would have loved and blessed his living foster-mother, for her care of him. In truth, it seemed easier to think of this pictured-woman as mother, than of Mr. Murray as father; for Robert's heart was sore, and his sense of justice wounded, by the abuse that the Superintendent had showered on Captain Allen and his family.

When we are young, and our experiences are narrow, we are apt to be severe in judging others, being too ignorant of human nature to make allowances. The other day I heard one say, "How easy your own faults make it for you to forgive others!" Knowledge of our own faults has not always this beneficent effect, but it should have. Robert had neither seen enough, nor felt enough to cover with the mantle of charity his new-found father's wrath. His mind was not with the Superintendent, nor with the future; but with the crestfallen Captain, the sturdy Bop, the weeping Eliza, and Pink.

But Mr. Murray, with his arm clasping closely his new-found son, was telling in his ear the painful tale of his loss; of his mother's grief and death of heart-break; of his own long, miserable search, and the years whereof he could write that he "had no pleasure in them." Such a

story could not but touch Robert's heart. A mist gathered in his eyes as he looked at the picture of his mother, and he felt that it should be his duty and his happiness to comfort the so-long-wretched father, who was ready to pour upon him all the fullness of his love.

From the story of the past Mr. Murray went to plans for the future. "Robert," he said, "I will do for you whatever you wish. We shall make a man of you. The first thing will be to send you to a first-class school, where they will push you on in languages and mathematics. You have wasted your time long enough on such a little paltry school as that of the Mountain. You must be hurried up to the level of other boys of your age. And such a school as I will select will attend carefully to your manners. I daresay you have been eating with steel forks, and not using finger-napkins, and have never seen a finger-bowl. All these little refinements of life you must learn, to fit you for the society you will live in. You are fifteen: much can be learned and done before you are twenty-one. Then I will take you abroad; you shall see the world. After two years of foreign travel, you shall come home, and go into business. Or, Robert, perhaps you would prefer the army. If you do, say so. I have influence enough to get

you into West Point. The schoolmaster says you are very diligent and bright. In two years' time you could be amply fitted for West Point. You would come out an officer. I should like to see you with a pair of epaulettes on your shoulders. Would you like it?"

"I don't know, Mr. Murray," faltered the amazed lad.

"Mr. Murray! I'm your father, boy."

"Father, I mean—I forgot."

"Yes, yes, I see, habit, habit. Well, we must form a new habit. On second thought, I should not prefer the army. It would keep you from me too much, and then you might be killed in an Indian skirmish, or in a war if we had a war. Your life is too precious. How would you like the navy? I have influence to get you into Annapolis Academy, and you could be tutored for the admission examinations. You would make a splendid naval officer, I am sure. How would you like to be captain of a man-of-war? Something better that than the barge *Fair-Weather*, eh? You might become Commodore or Admiral, eh?"

"Yes, Mr. M—father, if you choose."

"Yes. But, on second thought, I should not like the navy. I could not sail with you. The navy would part us too much. I need to

see you near me, to make up for all these lost, lonely years. We will not think of the navy, my son. How would you like to go to the Polytechnic, and graduate, and be a mining engineer? That is a fine, useful, manly business. We could travel over all the West together. You would become an expert, an authority. When you saw a chance for investment, you would have money to invest, and some venture might be as fortunate as was that of Agassiz, when he bought mines near Lake Superior. If you incline rather to literature, Robert, you could devote yourself to study, study in Europe, and come home to be a college president. That would suit me very well. I should be proud of you. Or, if you have a taste for politics, study law; your money will, at once, give you friends and influence. You could be sent to Congress; be Governor of your State; get one day to the White House! I wonder could I live long enough to see you inaugurated President of the United States!"

In fact, if Captain Allen had been *glorieux* when he found Robert, Mr. Murray was now *exalté* from the sudden joy of getting back his long-lost boy. He ran on, in a state of excitement, presenting picture after picture of possible honor,

fame, luxury, success, to the bewildered lad, who, half his heart yet clinging to the mill, Pink, 'Liza, 'Zekiel and Co., could only hear amazed, and say, "If you wish"; "Yes, if you like"; "Yes, Mr. Murray—I mean, father."

But the train was getting over the ground well, and they were nearing Philadelphia, and the cars were filling. The Superintendent's mind turned to nearer interests. He took a fresh start in planning. The gorgeous card-houses of future honors were abandoned in favor of smaller card-houses of present conveniences. Robert, a handsome, well-grown lad, wore an old, faded, outgrown suit, too short in sleeve and leg, and with more than one patch, neatly set by Eliza. His shirt was of striped cotton, his shoes cowhide, and his blue stockings, knit by Pink, were in plain sight at the ankles. Mr. Murray's fatherly pride took note of these deficiencies, and of the old felt hat that had seen two years' wear, and survived many a lively tussle with Bop and the twins.

"We will get our dinner at the station restaurant," Mr. Murray said, "and then we will go to a tailor, and get you fitted out from head to foot, before we go to a hotel. We will give orders for more clothes too, handsome clothes, the best there are. We must go to a barber's.

It is a pity that such beautiful curly hair as yours has been so villainously cut!"

"Mother always cut my hair," said Robert.

"Mrs. Allen? Don't say mother of her, your mother is dead."

But though Robert's heart could say mother of the fair-faced one who had nursed his babyhood, and died for lack of him, he must say mother also of that valiant, self-denying Eliza, who had been true mother to him for the ten years within his clearest memory. He was silent at Mr. Murray's pettish remonstrance, but his heart said "mother, mother, mother" of Eliza.

All was hurry and stir until they were in the quiet, handsomely-furnished room of a first-class tailoring establishment.

"I want this young gentleman fitted out with a full wardrobe of your best," said Mr. Murray. "Have you a nice suit in stock to begin on? and you can take his measure for two others. What are the styles? Knee-breeches? Brass buttons, plain cloths, silk-finished cords? Robert, how would you like one suit in deep navy-blue, and one in fine, dark bottle-green?"

"If you please, Mr. Mur—father," said Robert.

"We have a handsome, deep brown corduroy knee-breeches suit, with Norfolk jacket," said

the tailor. "Made to order—was a little small. I am sure it would fit this young gentleman."

"Bring it," said Mr. Murray. "Do you keep hats and caps? Can you order a trunk to put the goods in? Will you send out for shoes and slippers to try on? Take it in charge, will you, and fit him out completely at once. Suppose we begin at the furnishing department and get shirts and silk underwear and let him put a suit on. How many of each article should he have?"

The merchant had a conscience. Although here was a rich, lavish, excited customer, he did not think it right to make him buy out the whole store. He said as Robert was a growing boy, a half-dozen of things would be enough. So they adjourned to the furnishing department, and Mr. Murray held up neckties to try their effect on Robert's complexion, and disported himself generally rather like a mother buying a dress for a pretty daughter's first party, than like the father of a big, muscular lad, who had lived for ten years in a saw-mill and was now about to go to school.

Robert was fairly frightened at the amount of goods bought for him. What! four elegant neckties? His father, Captain Allen, had for two years worn the same black-silk stock fashioned by the prudent Eliza. What! six pairs of

fancy-colored half-hose? And how ignominiously were the blue woolen stockings knit by dear little Pink discarded. Robert longed to rescue one, but dared not. What! thirty dollars for that one suit of dark-brown silk corduroy? Thirty dollars! Had Eliza and Pink had as much spent in dress for them for the last three or four years? What would they say,—what would they think to see him now? And to tell the truth, when he saw himself in all his new glory reflected in a long glass, he wished they could see him!

CHAPTER XIV.

"THE MAKING OF A YOUNG GENTLEMAN."

It was long after dark when Robert and his new-found father left the tailor-shop. Measures had been taken for two more suits of clothes, and an overcoat trimmed with fur. Robert could now hardly realize himself. He wore the finest of clothing throughout; on his feet were a pair of the best shoes that eight dollars could buy; his cap cost five dollars. He had hitherto only worn mittens in the coldest weather; now he had on tan-colored kid gloves. A hem-stitched, linen kerchief stuck out of his breast-pocket. A trunk was already nearly packed with what Robert considered a lavish, wasteful, unnecessary supply of clothing, and was to be sent to the hotel. Next, Mr. Murray took his son to a barber-shop to have his hair dressed; and then to a fine bazaar, where he bought him a dressing-case with a quantity of ivory-backed brushes, and other knick-knackery.

"We will now go to the hotel and leave buy-

ing your other things until to-morrow," said Mr. Murray.

"You have bought me more than enough, and more than I shall ever use," said the sturdy Robert.

"I have plenty of money," said Mr. Murray.

"I know that—but—well, it seems wrong to have all these things when other people have none."

"You have a right to them if your father can pay for them," replied Mr. Murray, proudly. "You will see how much better it is, being with your true father, than with people like the Allens."

"You give me what I need, with you, and what you can afford," said Robert, earnestly, "and they did the same. It comes to the same thing, sir, as far as I can see—and—and I have known my mother to go without clothes that she needed, so that I could have shoes for winter"—and tears were in Robert's big, steadfast eyes as he spoke; for now he had two pairs of fine shoes, and a pair of worked slippers, and he remembered that his good "mother's" shoes were patched, and Pink's, oh, poor Pink's, were nearly out at the toes!

"You are not bound to measure what you have by what other folks have," said Mr. Mur-

ray. "We are going to the hotel. Have you ever seen the Continental Hotel?"

"Outside, I have," said Robert, placidly. "I never went inside that to sell jam and honey and butter, but I went inside a lot of the others."

"My goodness!" cried Mr. Murray. "I don't see what those Allens meant by sending my son about as a huckster!"

"But I was their son then," said Robert, "and I am afraid we might have all starved if we had not tried something like that. I invented the jam-selling, and we made money by it too, and I was awfully glad to do it. They treated me well at the hotels, and some of them told me I would make a fine business man. I hope I will."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Murray. "I hope, my son, that you will succeed in whatever you undertake."

They walked on in silence to the hotel. Mr. Murray was inwardly resentful that "those Allens" had sent his son on trading expeditions to the doors of hotels and boarding-houses; and Robert was calculating how long it was likely to be before he could go into business, "and make a whole lot of money," and send it *in toto* to Captain 'Zekiel, to pay off the mortgage, repair the mill, build a house, replenish the ward-

robes of all the family, and put "well, as much as two thousand in the bank."

They reached the hotel, and were taken to two fine communicating rooms. Then they went down to supper, and Mr. Murray watched Robert's every motion, and kept up a very discomfiting whisper about "do so, don't do so; not this, not that," and poor Robert, who had heretofore eaten his humble meals in blessed peace, was driven nearly out of his wits. Still, Eliza Allen had been fairly careful of her children's manners, and Robert was naturally refined and delicate in his ways, so that really he was conducting himself properly, and Mr. Murray was very proud of him. His hints were chiefly the outgrowth of nervous excitement, and a captious feeling that the pupil of "the Allens" must need correction. Among the persons in the dining-hall were several whom Mr. Murray knew, and great was his pride in introducing the tall, handsome Robert as "My son"; and hearing the compliments that were paid him.

"I heard you were going abroad, Murray," said one.

"I have changed my mind. I shall remain here to attend strictly to the education of my son, and defer going abroad for five years, until I can take him," said Mr. Murray, flushed and happy.

The next day Robert's new father went out with him again. Then there was more buying. A knife; how glad Robert was that his own knife, a gift from Mr. Murray, was accidentally in Bop's pocket, not his, when he left "home." A Russia-leather pocket-book—when could he fill it for them?

"Oh, you must have a Bible," said Mr. Murray, and went in and bought a fine Oxford Teacher's Bible.

Eliza had once given Robert a six-cent Testament on Christmas, and he had left it at "home" on the shelf in the wall at the head of his bed.

"My dear boy, the Bible should be from your own dear mother. What a loss you have had in losing her. She would have taught you and helped you as I cannot. All I can do is to write in this Bible, 'Our Son. In memory of his dead mother.'"

Yes, Robert liked and would value that. But there was the living mother, who had earned the six pence which paid for the little black-cloth Testament. She had written his name in it, and the verse, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word." And she had taught him texts before he could read; she had told him Bible stories; she had heard him say his

prayers, kneeling with Pink on one side of him, and Bop on the other, when they were all little dimpled creatures. It hurt Robert to have all this care of Eliza's ignored, but he saw that mention of the Allens irritated his father. But the glory of that day was a visit to a jeweller's, where Mr. Murray bought a very good watch, with a short, modest chain, and presented them to Robert. Oh, what a watch! It was not in the heart of a human boy to resist such a watch. It was a joy to own that watch, even though he remembered that Captain 'Zekiel had none.

Well, whatever Mr. Murray saw he wanted to buy for Robert, a scarf-pin, sleeve-links—whatever he could do to make of this sturdy, simple, honest boy, a ridiculous young dandy, Mr. Murray was ready in his folly to do. Not that he would be willing to change this decent, generous, unselfish, humble spirit, into a vain, self-conceited, lazy trifler. He took means to that end without a thought of that end. It was a true blessing of heaven, that ten years of hard work, humility, self-sacrifice, and sound training had made Robert hard to spoil.

"Wine, sir? Wine for you and the young gentleman?" said the brisk waiter at dinner.

"No!" cried Mr. Murray. "Why don't you go about saying arsenic, prussic acid, strych-

nine, if you must vend poisons? Try them for a change."

"Oh, sir!" remonstrated the waiter, "our wines are the very best."

"Warranted to kill at sight—like the rest?" said the irascible Mr. Murray.

The waiter went off smiling. "Temperance crank," he confided to the other waiters.

After dinner Mr. Murray asked Robert to wait in their rooms for him. He went off, and came back with a roll in his hand. He sat down, and wiped his face, with a long sigh.

"Robert, you understand, you know, how it was that I lost you? I was—drunk. By that drinking I broke up my home, caused your poor mother's most unhappy death, lost you, blackened all my life. Robert, you can see how I love you—but—I would far rather see you dead than given to wine or strong drink. Robert, have you ever signed a pledge?"

"No, sir. But I've heard plenty of temperance. Mother was great on that. They called me 'The Captain's Bargain' because father bargained he would never drink a drop more, if I stayed with him."

"I wish I had made such a bargain with myself, when God gave you to me first," said poor Mr. Murray, "then I should never have heard

you, my only child, calling strangers 'father and mother.' Well, Robert, I want you to sign a pledge. I want to feel safe about you—to make you safe. I know you will keep to what you pledge and promise. I went out and bought a Pledge—here it is. Read it over, my son. Read it and think about it, and then sign it, if you mean to keep it to the very last letter, in the fear of God."

"Of course I'll sign it," said Robert; "lend me your pen, please, father. I know what it means. I should keep it without signing. My mother made a temperance man of me long ago. I never thought of anything else."

"Well, I'm glad she did," said Mr. Murray. "I see, I must owe everything to these Allens."

"Why not?" said Robert, frankly. "I'd have been in a poorhouse only for them. There, it is signed, father."

"I see I have forgotten to buy you a pen, Robert; come out, and I will buy you a gold pen, and a writing-desk. You will not owe them to any one but me."

That writing-desk was a true treasure, for it was well stocked, and had, among other things, postal-cards and letter-stamps. That evening, while his father talked to some friends, Robert managed to send off a card to the Captain. In the

morning, while his father was yet asleep, Robert rose, and wrote a long letter to his mother, Eliza, telling how good his new-found father was, and how lavish in gifts, and how fond of him. And then he wrote, that he knew he should never be happy anywhere but at the mill; he would be glad to give up all his new possessions, to go back and be "their boy" once more. All the things in the world would not make up for his mother, and dear Pink. They might be sure he thought of them every hour in the day. Eight pages of clear, boyish writing did Robert mail to the Captain. Over that letter the entire Allen household cried again and again. The schoolmaster read it, proud of his pupil's head and heart; the Britts read it, all the district read it, and agreed that Robert deserved all the best that the Superintendent could do for him, and that "the Allens had had a dreadful loss."

"But he'll never get back here. Mr. Murray will not let him out of his sight again," said Deacon Britt.

But Mr. Murray's pride and ambition for his son were equal even to letting him live apart from him for a time. A week after he had carried Robert off in triumph from the mill, he said to him: "My dear boy, it would

be very pleasant for us to go on living here, at the hotel, buying things, and seeing sights all day long; but at that rate you would become an idler, and after idleness comes mischief. I must not spoil the industry and uprightness that have always been so beautiful in you, to me. You must go to school."

"I like to go to school," said Robert.

"But this will be a very different affair from the red school-house up on the Mountain. You must apply yourself to Latin and French and German. I have been to see the master of a school, about ten miles from the city. He says, as you have had so few advantages, and are so far behind other boys, you had better board at the school. You will be able to give closer attention to your studies. I will go out to see you every Saturday afternoon, and once a month you shall come here Friday evening, and stay until Monday morning. I wanted you to have a room by yourself, so that I could furnish it up handsomely, but the master says he has the boys in dormitories, six or eight in each, and that it will be far better for you to be with the rest, as you have seen so little of other boys."

"But I have seen a great deal of other boys," said Robert; "I have always known plenty of boys."

"I mean boys of your own station in life,—young gentlemen,—nice boys."

"I don't think there could be nicer boys than those I knew on the Mountain," said Robert. "They knew all kinds of games; they could ride, and swim, and dive, and fish, and shoot, and climb. They minded what was said to them, told the truth, learned their lessons, were all teetotalers, and were never ugly or saucy to the girls. You don't know, father, what nice boys were at our red school-house."

"Yes? Well, no doubt you will be just as pleased with your new schoolmates. I hope you will be happy at the school. Even if you do not like it there, you know school-life is necessary for you, and the more diligent you are, the sooner it will be over, and I will take you to see all the famous countries of the old world."

Robert made no answer. He did not say what he might have said truly, that Lal's Mountain looked to him far more beautiful than all the countries of the old world, and that he was full of a deadly home-sickness for the mill and the dear faces there. The reverence which Eliza had inculcated for parents and elders restrained him, and to it was added Lal's Mountain respect for the great man,—the Superintendent. As yet,

Robert had not been able to lose the Superintendent in the father.

"They will be rather strict at the school," said Mr. Murray. "I meant to give you ten dollars a month for pocket-money, but the master only allows two dollars."

"That will make no difference to me," said Robert, "for I have never had any money to spend."

"Still, you should become accustomed to the use of money. I think I shall give it to you just the same, and you can take two dollars of it to school. What will you do with the rest? How will you spend it?"

"I shall not spend it," said Robert; "I shall put the whole ten dollars in a bag every month and keep it in my trunk. Ten dollars a month will be a hundred and twenty dollars in a year."

Mr. Murray shook his head.

"Early poverty makes of some men misers, of others spendthrifts. One extreme is about as bad as the other. Money hoarded, money wasted, alike curse the world. Money is valuable only for what good it will secure for us. What good will money do in a trunk?"

"In two years," said Robert, "I shall have two hundred and forty dollars. Then I shall send Pink for a year to a school where she can

learn music. You don't know how Pink loves music. She sings just like a bird. I heard mother ask the master once about schools where Pink could learn music, and the cheapest was two hundred dollars a year. The forty dollars would pay her car-fare and buy her some shoes and frocks. Mother said a music-school was far out of Pink's reach. But it will not be if I pay for it."

"And you would save up every penny for two years for that?" cried Mr. Murray, in a vexed tone.

"Of course," said Robert. "I never have had money to spend. And you are so kind to me, father, and give me so many things, that there is nothing left for me to buy."

This planning for the benefit of the Allen family did not stir up Mr. Murray to consider his own obligations to them. It rather stirred up his wrath that the Allens had so large a share of his son's heart. In his paternal feelings he was so unreasonable that all whom Robert loved seemed his father's rivals and enemies. He told himself that it was quite time Robert went to school, where hard study, a new phase of life, and the sports of boys who were used to the city and the boarding-school, and had nothing in common with mills, barges, country schools,

and little red-headed maids in calico gowns, would wean Robert's thoughts from the Allen household. Pink and Eliza seemed to Mr. Murray the especial foes of his peace. He pointed out to Robert one of the ladies who lived at the hotel and came down to breakfast daily in a splendid silk morning-robe.

"Now, Robert, there is a lady; the kind of lady you will see in society when you are a man. What do you think of her?"

"She looks very well, but not—very useful," said the boy, "and I don't think her face is half as nice as my mother's—my mother Allen's, I mean—for I never saw any face half as nice as the one in my real mother's picture."

"I'm glad you have sense to appreciate that," said his father. "And what do you think of those two little girls in dark blue, at the other end of the hall?"

"They don't begin with Pink," said Robert, scornfully.

"Pink has red hair. I don't like red hair, myself."

"Oh, father! Pink's hair is the most beautiful gold color! Sometimes you cannot tell it from the color of mother's wedding-ring! And Pink's eyes are just as blue as the sky, or as violets. And Pink is so kind to the twins, and

so nice to her mother. I heard that biggest girl say, 'Indeed, I won't,' to her mother yesterday; and that other one gave her little brother a slap for getting some candy on her dress. Pink and mother are worth the whole lot in this hotel! If you'd only go up there, and get acquainted with them, father, you'd see——"

Robert's eyes shone with eager pleading. But Mr. Murray was an obstinate and a jealous man He shook his head again.

"No, no, you've seen quite too much of them, Robert."

Robert and his father were sitting in their room reading, the next evening, when Robert, hearing a deep sigh, looked up, and saw that his father had sunk back in his chair, his face very white, and that he seemed quite unconscious. He sprang to him, wheeled his chair to the window, which he threw open, then bathed his face, and rubbed his hands, and loosened his necktie and collar. Presently Mr. Murray revived a little.

"Give me that bottle of medicine from my dressing-case, Robert. There, help me to the sofa. No, don't ring—I'm used to this."

He lay for a time quietly. Then he said, as Robert kept close by him, and looked distressed:

"You were frightened, my boy?"

"Oh, yes! I thought you were dead! I never saw any one faint before, except Mrs. Britt, once. Are you better now?"

"Yes. Ever since my troubles in losing you and your dear mother, I have had these attacks. You felt badly to see me so, did you, Robert?"

"Indeed I did," said Robert, resting his head on Mr. Murray's prematurely gray hair.

At the sight of Mr. Murray lying as if dead, the boy's heart had recognized, as never before, the filial tie. He knew that he loved this late-found father.

"Robert," said Mr. Murray, presently, "what would you have done if I had died?"

Robert was silent.

"Tell me, my son, suppose that I had died, what then?"

"Why—I suppose I should have gone back to the mill. Where else could I go, father?"

"And what would you do with all your money, my son?"

"What money, sir? I would not have any money, would I?"

"Of course, you would have all mine. Are you not my only son and heir? You would have many thousands, Robert. What would you do with your money? Speak up."

"I should do with it—just whatever my mother

told me to," said Robert. "I should make father—Allen—take all that they need, and I should do as mother advised with the rest. Every one says mother is a business woman, and has such a good head. But, don't ask me things like that, please, father. You won't die, will you? Are you sure you are better? I couldn't bear to have you die, you know."

This assurance gave some consolation to poor Mr. Murray in the midst of his jealous suspicion of the Allen influence.

CHAPTER XV.

"A TOKEN OF MY TRUE LOVE."

THAT night while Robert slept soundly, Mr. Murray, in the next room, spent many wakeful hours. Since finding his son, Mr. Murray had thought of nothing but the joy of the present hour. He seemed to have a new lease of life, and to see, in prospect, many happy years spent with his boy. Robert should become all that his father's most ambitious dreams forecast for him; he should escape the moral rocks and quicksands whereon his father's life had come to wreck; his father would renew his own youth, and live a new and better life in the son. But the fainting fit in the evening, and the short conversation after it, had filled Mr. Murray with new fears. If he should die, his son would return to the Allens, and soon forget the father who had been so short an episode in his life. All the Murray fortunes would be bestowed on the Allens, who, as poor Mr. Murray insisted on believing, had robbed him of his boy, usurped

his place in his child's heart, refused to give him his own son!

Mr. Murray resolved at once to perform two neglected duties. He would go to a physician of eminence, and have a thorough examination of his own physical state, and learn what were his probable prospects of life. Then he would go to a lawyer, and have a will drawn up, leaving his property to Robert, in the hands of a Trust Company, and appointing two guardians of his person, so that he should not go back to Lal's Mountain. Moreover, as Allen influence was so strong in the lad's heart, Mr. Murray concluded to give him more time to outgrow it, and determined to set not twenty-one, but twenty-four, as the time when Robert should come into possession of his property. He was determined not to allow Robert to throw himself and his money away on "those people at the mill."

Therefore, when breakfast was over, Mr. Murray said, "I have business, Robert, which will keep me away from you until our six o'clock dinner. I suppose you know your way about the city, and can entertain yourself. I will give you some money to spend. Here—here are ten dollars."

He handed Robert a ten-dollar bill. They

went out upon the hotel steps and Mr. Murray signalled a carriage for himself.

"Enjoy yourself, Robert. Go to Fairmount Park or somewhere. But, stop. A ten-dollar bill will be large to change; here is a two, also, in case you need car-fare or some small thing."

He stepped into the carriage and drove off, leaving Robert with the open pocket-book in his hand, and the two bills looking out of the Russia-leather pockets. Oh dear, how very glad he would be if he could put that money in Eliza's hand and beg her to use it for the family. But he knew the sturdy independence of Eliza and her family. She would not take a gift of money, —that money being Mr. Murray's gift to him. She had not refused Robert's earnings; she took them freely when he gave them, just as she freely shared her earnings with him. But this money would be different; she would not accept it. Then came the happy thought: she would not refuse; she could not return a present purchased as a token of his love with this money. He had the whole day before him. Why should he not go shopping? Why should he not spend that twelve dollars in a gift to each member of the beloved household and send it to them to show them that his heart was with them, though in bodily presence he might not be with them

for years? There was a store where Eliza had liked to trade, and where she had been wont to say that goods were cheap and well-selected, and the young girl-clerks were very good and attentive. There Robert would go and do his shopping. But what should he get, and how much would twelve dollars buy? Who could tell him? He would throw himself upon the mercies of a girl-clerk.

Now, as it was early in the day, before the tide of shopping began to flow fast and furious through the big store, when Robert, a very handsome and winsome fifteen-year-old boy, most faultlessly arrayed, put his face inside the door of the huge establishment, he saw behind a counter, standing at ease, a very smiling and pretty maiden, with rosy cheeks and golden hair,—a kind of eighteen-year-old Pink. To her, as to a tutelar angel, did Robert turn for counsel and direction.

"If you please, Miss, I want to buy a present —for my mother—and sister."

"Yes? Fancy goods? laces? albums? Which department of the store will you go to?"

"I think—I had—better get dresses."

"Oh," said the damsel, taking in Robert's fine linen, bottle-green cloth, and tan-colored kid gloves. "Something in silk, then?"

Robert was quick-witted enough to see the situation.

"No, if you please," he said, sitting down before the counter and bending over to intrust his confidences to the maiden. "They are my adopted mother and sister, and the rest—they live in the country and they are poor. I want to send them all presents, and I have twelve dollars, and I want to make it go as far as I can. I wish you would help me pick out the things. I never went shopping before. I can sell things, but I don't understand buying."

"I see," said the damsel.

So she slipped from behind the counter and had a short interview with a stout "floor-walker."

"I may go with you and help you do your shopping," said the girl, coming back to Robert. "We have some excellent bargains in dress-goods, if you don't mind last winter's goods instead of this fall's patterns. How old is your sister?"

"She is thirteen, and she has blue eyes and yellow hair."

"Is your mother a big woman?"

"No; she is a little woman. She is thin, and not so tall as you are. She is dark."

"Now, I know about the colors and the number of yards you will want," said the obliging

girl, "so let us go to the bargain counter. But tell me, first—how many other presents must you get out of the twelve dollars?"

"There is the little sister—the twin—she is ten. I would like to get her a calico dress. Besides these, are father, Bop, Jerry, and the other twin,—the boy. I want to get them all something, and I must save out enough to pay for sending the package up to Lal's Mountain."

The girl consulted a book.

"We can send the parcel for you for fifty cents. Will you get handkerchiefs and neckties for your father and the boys? We have some very good bargains in those things just now. Or stockings,—we have a very cheap line of stockings."

"Pink knits all the stockings."

"She must be busy, then, to knit for such a lot of them."

"She is busy. She always has her knitting in hand. But then, for Jerry, one stocking is a pair; for you see he has one wooden leg, and that saves him one stocking."

"I hope none of the rest are so unlucky," said the girl, laughing.

"No, they are not. And then, too, Jerry has only one eye. But for all he has only one leg, and one eye, he can run the mill."

"Ah! a mill, is it? That accounts for the one leg and the one eye. Mills are terribly dangerous places. I wonder they leave any one alive that goes near them."

"Our mill is not dangerous. And, then, it was not the mill that hurt Jerry. Whiskey did it!"

"Oh! Well, I hope Master Jerry has reformed. He had better have left whiskey alone. Let it alone, I say, and it won't hurt you."

"I think you make a mistake there," said Robert. "Jerry let it alone; he never touched a drop in his life, and yet he lost a leg and one eye because other folks touched it. It seems we are never safe from whiskey, as long as any one uses it. A drunken carman lost Jerry a leg, and a drunken shoemaker lost him an eye."

"Possible!" cried the girl. "Do you see this white ribbon I wear? It means I belong to the Temperance Union, and now I shall change my motto, and instead of saying, 'Let it alone and it won't hurt you,' I will say, 'As long as there is any of it made, it may hurt you.'"

They had been threading the mazes of the store, and turning over a great pile of woolen dress-goods during this chat. The pleasant girl now fixed on a piece of goods of small blue-and-black plaid.

"There! This is nice, and very cheap, and just enough for a girl of thirteen who does not use many furbelows. I should take that, if I were you. And this dark-brown serge is a remnant, sold cheap. I am sure your mother would like that. Come over to the calico counter. Here is a very nice dark piece, with violets on it. That is going at about half-price."

Robert agreed to the young girl's taste, and then followed her to the baskets where were bargains in handkerchiefs, neckties, and other small wares. He bought a pair of chamois-skin gloves for Captain Allen, and a leather pocket-book—alas! that it was doomed to be so empty—ties and handkerchiefs for Jerry and the boys, and buttons and other material for making up the dresses. He was overjoyed to find how far the pretty little maid made his money go, and had not been so happy since he was torn from his home and the family therein. At last, eleven dollars and a half, to the very last cent, were spent.

"You write out the address for me," said the girl, "and I will have the parcel sent, prepaid."

"Will you give me a card to write a line on, to put in the bundle?" said Robert.

And, taking out his stylographic pen, he wrote on the card: "A token of my true love." As

he wrote, the observant shop-girl wondered how it was that the hand from which Robert had pulled the fine kid glove was evidently the hand of a boy that had worked hard, and she also wondered how it was that the relatives of a boy with so fine a watch, so nice a suit, and so elegant a stylographic pen, should be poor enough to need and use the simple gifts that the lad had just purchased. But girls who clerk in stores see many curious things.

After the shopping was done, Robert bade his fair helper good-bye, and walked off to Fairmount Park. He had not left himself a cent for car-fare, nor to buy a biscuit for lunch. But in thinking how pleased Eliza and the others would be with their presents, he forgot to be tired or hungry. He sat on one of the Park benches and counted up the years before he should be done with school, and be a man, and be earning money for himself, which money he should share with those who had shared their little all with him. Would old Mr. Wick live until then, and the mortgage on the mill escape foreclosure? He realized his father's hostility to the Allens; he wished he could make them friends, but he felt that at present the less he said about them the better. It was a long walk back to the hotel. He happened to reach there just as his

father returned in the carriage. As they went up to their room to make ready for dinner, Mr. Murray said:

"You look tired, my son. Where have you been?"

"To Fairmount Park."

"But you never walked home from there?"

"Yes, sir. I—had spent all my money," said Robert, embarrassed.

"Did you get your dinner there?" asked his father. "No? Why not?"

"I had spent all my money, sir. I am afraid you will think me a spendthrift now. The other day you thought I was going to be a miser," and Robert laughed in a hesitant fashion.

"I gave you twelve dollars this morning," said his father. "I hope, my dear boy, you have not fallen in with sharpers. However, whatever it is, I beg that you will not fear to speak out, and say just what you have done with it."

"I went up to the store, sir, and I spent eleven dollars and a half in buying presents, and fifty cents for sending them. I got my mother and Pink and the little one dresses; and handkerchiefs and ties and so on for the rest. I enjoyed it very much. A very nice girl-clerk helped me to buy the things. I hope you are not angry with me, but I could not keep money

in my purse and not send a present to them, when I have so very much and they have so little, and they have always shared and shared alike with me." Robert's big brown eyes were fixed on his father, with that steadfast look which Mr. Murray knew so well.

"Of course I am not angry," said Mr. Murray, coldly. "You can do as you please with your own. And," he added bitterly, "I fancy they will be ready to take whatever you give them."

"No, sir," said Robert, quick to catch the tone of imputation of greed; "oh, no. They are very independent. They will not send me back my presents, because they will know that would hurt my feelings, but they would not take money from me, and they would not let me keep on sending presents. They would feel that the money was yours, not mine."

"Well, well, son, they have a vigorous defender," said Mr. Murray, laying his arm over Robert's shoulder. "Come to dinner. You must be half dead with fatigue and hunger. Hereafter, never spend your last cent. Remember that."

Mr. Murray could not feel irritated long that evening. He was in a very happy mood. The report of the doctor had been far better than his

fears. He had no chronic disease. A long nervous strain had worn and weakened him, but now that he was satisfied and happy, with proper care there was no reason why he should not live for the next twenty years. He could see his boy grow up to manhood! He could hope to see him prospering in business, happily married, his family about him! His heart glowed at the thought of having years to live with this beloved son. And then his mind was relieved about the matter of the will. The future of Robert was secured. He had arranged all for him with care. He had seen two of his most trusty friends, men of tried integrity, and he had obtained their consent to be appointed Robert's guardians. Now, if left an orphan, Robert would not go back to Lal's Mountain to lavish his all upon the Allens. Until he was twenty-four years old, and therefore had had time to forget his early friends, the boy's fortune was secure. This was a good day's work. Mr. Murray rubbed his hands, ordered turtle soup and roast venison for himself and Robert, and talked cheerfully through the meal. There was a lecture that evening on India, illustrated with stereoscopic views; he took Robert to hear and see it.

"There," he said, as they walked home, when it was over, "when you have finished your school-

days, you and I will travel, and see those far lands for ourselves."

When they were back in their room, Mr. Murray lay on the sofa, and told Robert his plans.

"Robert, I will give you this first year in school, to decide on what you wish to be. If you choose to go to college, in two years you will be well fitted. If you prefer the Polytechnic, and the Mining Engineer's course, you can enter upon it next year.

"I mean to buy a lot near the city and build a house and furnish it. You shall furnish your own room to suit yourself. I want you to have some place to call home, and think of as home. That house shall be headquarters. We will bring there the treasures we collect. You can invite your boy-friends there for vacations. We shall have a garden, a small conservatory, a stable, a carriage, and a pair of riding-horses. And at school—wherever you are—at college, at the Polytechnic, you will work very hard and not distract your mind with other things. Tell me, Robert, do you like these plans?"

"Yes, sir," said Robert, sincerely.

What boy would not like to hear of a plan for a room furnished to his own taste—of a riding-horse always at his service?

"I don't want you to be without a business, a regular occupation, an aim in life, Robert. I have money enough to keep you without labor. But I have seen enough of these Golden Youth who do nothing but spend the money their fathers have earned by toil and care. What right, in this busy world, has a young man, full of bodily vigor and mental power, to spend his years yachting, dancing, giving dinners, playing tennis and polo, day in and day out, and riding forth at times to exhibit before the ladies his fashionable clothes and his horsemanship? I say that such a life is contemptible and unmanly. As the French say, we should all of us show the *raison d'être;* that is, the reason for our existence. A man has no right to live merely to eat up the proceeds of other men's labor. That is the curse of the Old-World system of hereditary aristocracy, and it bids likely to be the curse of the New World with its plutocracy. Mind you, my lad, I have worked and made my money. I expect you to work and make money. And as the money rolls up, we can use it well. I like to see men found libraries or hospitals; present public-gardens or picture-galleries to their cities; help on all great philanthropic enterprises. It is grand to have enough money of your own earning in your hand, to be able to respond liberally

when you are appealed to to help on good work. If there is a man I envy it is Peabody, who has written his name in golden letters around the civilized world. When I was a young man the five letters in the name Dodge represented to me a man who was never deaf when a cry for help was lifted. When I myself was giving way to sin,—when I was suffering untold agonies because the penalty of my sin had fallen upon me,—I honored the man who with other men was battling the curse under the power of which I had fallen. Be a man, my son,—a good man, a useful man, a great man,—such a man as I should have been, but was not."

Robert, whether he would or not, could not fail to see the mingling of noble and foolish ambitions in his father's wishes for him. It occurred to him that justice should first be served, and justice demanded a grateful recognition of the kindness of Captain 'Zekiel and his family. To stand shoulder to shoulder with such a family and pull them through their adversities seemed to Robert as good a work as could be done, and if his father was inclined to love temperance people for their work's sake, where was there a stauncher little temperance woman than Mistress Eliza? He felt inclined to put these pertinent propositions to Mr. Murray, but ab-

stained, remembering that the same Eliza had carefully taught him a lesson, now nearly out of date, but none the less valuable, namely, that young people are not particularly commissioned to criticise their elders. The day of right feeling between the Superintendent and the Captain might come all the quicker if Robert maintained a respectful silence. All this passed in his mind while his father was talking, and he said heartily:

"I think you are a very good man, father. When a person has done wrong and is sorry for it, and does wrong no more, we think other people should not be throwing up the past to them. God does not cast it up against them, for I remember once the schoolmaster gave us a lesson on that, and his text was, 'His sins which he hath committed shall no more be mentioned unto him.' And so I think we should not be bringing up the past in hard words against ourselves. There is no need of our doing what God would not and our fellow-men should not, is there?"

Mr. Murray smiled, and patted Robert's hand. "You are a great comfort to me, my son." Then added, sadly, "But my sins cost us your mother."

"I believe," said Robert, "that as soon as my mother got to heaven, an angel was sent to tell her that all would turn out right for you and

me, and so she at once forgot the sorrow she had had, and has been perfectly happy ever since. It must be so, you know, since no trouble can get into heaven."

Mr. Murray at first took some present comfort from these suggestions. Then, as he belonged to the human variety, "self-tormentor," he began to think that Robert was such a wise, good boy, he must be going to die early. While he made himself miserable over that, Robert suddenly began to expound to him certain episodes of his life, wherein he had thrashed Jim Long, and quarrelled with Tom Britt, and brought down on himself the wrath of the schoolmaster by painting a boy's face with walnut juice; and again by putting a quantity of popping-corn under the open-work top of the school-room stove, so that said corn suddenly taking to popping, flew in a white shower over all the school-room. These recitals revived the spirits of Mr. Murray, who realized that there was nothing alarmingly angelic in his progeny. He felt vexed also, as in these stories of the past rang the longing for the "home" at the mill, and the dear ones there. It is one of our human traits to dislike those whom we have treated unjustly. Mr. Murray had been grossly unjust to the Allens, and he disliked them accordingly.

CHAPTER XVI.

MASTERS AND GOVERNORS.

Mr. Murray felt as if the doors of Paradise closed against him, when he left Robert at boarding-school, and turned away to go alone to his hotel. Still, he believed he was acting for Robert's good, and he counted the hours from the Monday morning until he should allow himself to go on Saturday afternoon to see his son. Already he began to consider what he should take to him. The master had explained that novels and candy were tabooed, as well as extra pocket-money. Mr. Murray concluded that he would treat Robert and the school to grapes and peaches.

Meanwhile Robert was introduced to the school-room, and vigorously stared at. The boys estimated the fineness of his clothes and the appearance of his watch. Those who made dress and money a ground of friendship, concluded to be on intimate terms with the new boy.

The tutor began to inquire into Robert's

accomplishments. Unluckily, he began with French and Latin, and Robert knew not a word of either. Down he went into the beginning-class, where the boys were younger and much smaller than himself. As this class were also in the rudiments of geography, arithmetic, history, and grammar, Robert was very unequally placed, for he had been well drilled in all these branches, and in them, as in reading, spelling, and penmanship, scarcely a boy in the school was equal to him. The schoolmaster in the little red schoolhouse had done his work well, and beside these important branches of education had given Robert and his fellow-pupils a fund of useful general information. Robert was disgusted and discouraged to find himself put back in the English branches, to a place which he had passed two years before. He felt that the tutor and the pupils unjustly undervalued his acquirements, but he did not understand that he should remonstrate against his unpleasant position.

"Put all your time on these grammars, until you catch up with the class," said the tutor, handing him his Latin first books.

The other boys in beginning had had explanations in class, and, for years, had heard other boys reciting in Latin. Robert had had none of these aids, and the pages looked to him

a senseless and hopeless maze. Oh, what a hateful school this was! Oh, to be back at the red school-house on the Mountain! Recess came, and the boys took him in hand. Their examination was as ruthless and unsatisfactory as that of the tutor.

"Can you play cricket?"

"No."

"Base-ball?"

"No."

"Can you fence?"

"No."

"Have you been drilled in gymnastics? Can you do this and that and the other, that these boys are doing on the bars and rings and ropes?"

"No." Robert had not been initiated into any of these things.

"Gracious goodness, man!" cried the young leader of the school. "Where have you lived? Have you been brought up in the back-woods?"

"Yes, I have," said Robert, promptly.

"Didn't you go to school?" exclaimed several.

"Yes. Certainly."

"Then why are you not on better? Did you not begin Latin?"

"No. They taught no Latin in my school."

"I wish I'd been there," groaned one boy.

"You're in for it here," said another. "It is nothing but cram, cram, cram at Latin from week's end to week's end."

Poor Robert! He could have crammed anything else with a better heart. He had no natural talent for languages, and his present tutor was not one calculated to inspire enthusiasm for a study. His classmates being younger than himself, and not particularly gifted, Robert found it easy to overtake them in the few lessons by which they were in advance of him. That done, the regular lessons in Latin and French occupied but a little time each day, and the lessons in arithmetic, grammar, history, and geography he did not need to study at all, as his drill on them had been thorough in the red school-house. Thus left to idle time, Robert would fall to dreaming. Oh, beautiful red school-house on the mountain-side. How good it had been to be there, exchanging dagger-glances of wrath and challenge with his enemy, Jim Long; striving, in generous emulation, with Tom Britt for the headship of the classes; getting peeps at marvellous worlds through the master's microscope; dear Pink on the seat by his side, sharing his blue desk all the years of their school-life, Pink's yellow head bowed over the same Reader with his head; Pink's wide, dismayed

blue eyes turned to him in appeal for help over difficult problems, for arithmetic was Pink's terror and Robert's forte. How delightful had been school-life up there on the Mountain! In summer, looking through open door or window, you could see red or gray squirrels whirling around the tree-trunks; or great, splendid woodpeckers drumming for food; in the autumn, the trees in red and gold, made garlands all around the play-ground, and you could hear chestnuts and hickorynuts rattle down among the withered leaves; in winter, how whitely lay the snows about the door, and what fantastic shapes the trees and bushes took under their soft mantles; and then, in spring, the robins and bluebirds came to the very threshold, or window-seat, and built nests in plain sight! Robert's longing soul would be lost in such dreams as these, the splendid appointments of his present "First-class Establishment for Young Gentlemen" quite forgotten, until the sharp rap, rap, rap of the tutor's ruler on the desk, and the warning voice, "Robert Murray! You are not attending to your lessons!" would bring him to himself. But what lessons had he to attend to?

Robert had no especial talent for drawing; he was no artist in embryo, but he could scrawl or sketch something that was at least recogniza-

ble. His hand, following the meanderings of his heart, drew inside the covers, on the fly-leaves, all along the margins of his books, mills and water-wheels; rows of beehives. One-legged Jerrys climbed up along the right-hand margin of his history and travelled down the left-hand margin, and marched across the lower margins, as if one-legged Jerrys were the sole heroes of the historic tales. Over the pages of his copy-book, in and out among maps and Caucasians and Ethiopians and Malays, rolled dripping mill-wheels, and rose trembling little bridges and rude picnic camps. The barge *Fair-Weather* sailed right across the unimpeachable pages of the spelling-book, and Bop's rudely-cropped head and square, honest countenance, looked forth among examples for parsing and graced the interstices of the multiplication-table. Eliza, Pink, and Captain 'Zekiel did not appear in these tracings, they were too sacred to delineate, but none the less did Robert hug their dear images in his heart.

Mr. Murray, intensely proud of his son, had boasted of him much to the Principal of the "First-class Establishment." Too much, the Principal thought. He believed it only right to lower this paternal pride a little.

"The boy is very backward; he is in class

with boys two years younger," he said to Mr. Murray.

"That is owing to his unfortunate lack of advantages; he will soon press on and take his proper place."

"Indeed, I fear not. He is not even diligent; he sits and dreams and idles away his time. He is the least attentive boy in school. He seems never to be paying attention to his books."

Mr. Murray, much dismayed, implored Robert to take an interest, to be diligent, to get on quickly.

"I don't know what to do," said Robert. "I know all my lessons. I never make a mistake."

"I daresay not. Well, Robert, apply yourself—apply yourself. You must make up for two or three years that you are behind the rest."

Robert, however, was in the very agonies of home-sickness. His lonely heartache grew upon him; he could not distract his mind from his lost home and friends; his heart hovered over their memory, as a bird hovers over her nestlings. Neither study nor sport attracted him.

"I hope my son is giving you more satisfaction," said Mr. Murray, anxiously, to the Principal.

For answer, the disgusted Principal spread

before him Robert's books "with original illustrations," none of them belonging to the text.

"That is the way he spends his time in school! I never saw such a sight in my life as those books! How can a boy learn from books scrawled up in that fashion!"

Mr. Murray was about as much dismayed at the sight of these "free-hand drawings" as was the Principal. With these before his eyes continually, Robert would be little likely to forget Lal's Mountain and the Allen mill.

"Get him a new set of books, burn these up, and let him keep the others clean," decided Mr. Murray.

Therefore, Robert found on his desk a complete new set of books, and a card with the legend: "Robert Murray, having ruined one set of books in a few weeks, is provided with another set, and requested not to scrawl on the margins."

Letters came to Robert from the mill. Now and then Captain Allen would labor at a note to "his dear son," a note only moderately well spelled, and very poorly written. Bop wrote a sheet of chronicles of nutting expeditions, and snow-fort building and defending, and besieging. Bop's letter was open to criticism. Bop was not strong in English grammar. But Eliza and Pink

wrote most of the letters, and filled them with the simple chronicles of the home, and the neighborhood, and the burden of their longing for their "dearest Robert." These letters Robert seized with eagerness, and read again and again.

"I wonder what Pink put that 'lec' in red ink, over the top of her letter for," he said, absently, one day, as, sitting on his desk, during "nooning," he read a letter. "I wonder where Pink got the red ink."

North, the boy whom he liked best, was reading a letter near him.

"What are you talking about, Murray? That 'lec'? Pink, as you call her, didn't do that. Don't you know anything, boy? The Prex put that there to show that he had read it."

"Read my letter! What right had he to read my letter?"

"The right of might, and, moreover, the right of law. It is a rule of the establishment; the Prex sees all the letters. Haven't you noticed they are all unsealed?"

"So they are. I was so glad to get mine, I never noticed it. I think that is a mean rule. I don't like my letters read."

"It's not pleasant," said North; "but after all, there is some reason in it. I have known of a fearful lot of trash being sent into school-

mails, where they were not looked after. I suppose the Prex only glances at them, though."

"Lec—what does lec mean?" said Robert.

"Why, man, it's a supine. You are dull! Lego, legera, legi, lectum—lectum, read. There, now, that's Latin."

"Lectum? I thought it meant a bed; it does in my book."

"It can mean more than one thing, can't it? Don't we say in English: I may read, and I have read (red) a book."

"But they are parts of the same verb, you know."

"Well, we say a pair of shoes, and we eat a pear."

"But they are spelled differently."

"But, boy, we say you peer into a well, and that one man is another man's peer. Such are some of the beauties of the English language. The Latin has similar beauties, as you will slowly discover."

"Anyway, I am sorry that Pink's letters are read. Still, if it is a rule, I can't help it."

"Since we came here under rules, we might as well abide by them with a good grace; it is only honorable to do so," said North. "But the rules are easily evaded. I often think laws seem only made to be broken. Half of the boys

get letters, privately, through that stationer's little shop around the corner. They are sent to the man there, for the boys. There is no rule to hinder a fellow buying pens or paper, and his letters are slipped into his pocket meanwhile."

"But I think that looks very mean of the stationer. He should let the Prex run his school in his own way. He should not help the boys to break rules."

"Bah! he don't care. The boys pay him for it. If it was only the letters, now! But he sells candy by the pounds, secretly to them, and wine and beer. He keeps bottles of those things under his counter. The fellows run in to buy a paper, or a pencil, and swallow a drink. One fellow carried off three bottles, hidden about him, and drank them at night, and got drunk; and we did have work to keep him in bed in the morning, and not let the Tute know what was up."

"I think that is beastly," said Robert, full of disgust.

"So do I. But there is scarcely a big school where there is not near it some place to sell drinks. The law is that no saloons or liquor-selling places are to be near school-houses. I read that once in Boston, two saloons were nearer the school-house than the law allowed. But instead of ordering the liquor-places away,

they got the school-houses condemned and moved the schools."

"We never had such doings where I came from," said Robert. "I should think this whiskey-selling to the school-children would be found out."

"It is not, or not for a long time. The boys make a point of honor of not telling. While they are acting as they think so honorably, to a rascal who is breaking the law, they are letting their schoolmates, and brothers, and so on, be ruined with whiskey. These places sell brandy in candy jugs and bottles made of sugar; they keep ale and beer under the counter, and rum and gin and wine in lemonade bottles, or labelled 'lime juice,' or 'fruit syrup.' Or, they have a little den behind the shop, where the boys can slide in and get a 'half-and-half,' or 'Tom and Jerry,' or some such. There are dozens of city school-houses fixed out just that way, with liquor sold at a newspaper-stand, or a lunch-stand, that looks as if it had only cake and biscuits; or at a stationer's shop. Land! I've known boys to really steal dimes from their mother's purse, or their father's cash-drawer, to buy julep, or egg-nog, or sling with lemon in it."

"I never before heard of such things," cried Robert.

"Oh, well, you're from the country," said North in a superior manner. "Now, some of the fellows here are going to have a supper after hours to-night. You see, they smuggle in the things, and, when all the house is asleep, we get up and spread the supper on one of the beds, and sit around in our night-shirts, and feast like Sardanapalus. Perhaps you don't know him, though?"

"Yes, I do know Sardanapalus,—knew him long ago. I've been through Ancient and Modern three times."

"Well, that's the way we do it. To-night the spread is to be turkey stuffed with truffles, pickles, Vienna-rolls, mince-pie, fruit-cake, and some other things. It is in our dormitory, not in yours. I don't mind taking a hand in it myself. It's great fun; only I'm out of this, because the fellows have got champagne. I draw a line at champagne. I've no objection to sitting on the head-board or foot-board of the bed in my night-shirt and eating Strasburg patties, or pickled olives, or calves'-foot jelly, or any of the rest, but I don't believe in the champagne. I promised my mother I wouldn't touch any kind of wine, and I'm a man of my word."

"Well, I've signed a temperance pledge," said Robert.

"Signed a pledge, have you?" said Cocker, one of the boys, coming in just then. "What did you do that for?"

"Because my father wanted me to, and because I thought I ought to, and because I meant to do it, and so why not say it, and because I believe in temperance."

"Tuts! tuts! Ain't you rich, Murray?"

"No, I am not. I haven't any money at all."

"Then how do you come to be dressed to kill, and have a watch, and a writing-desk, and a dressing-case, and all such paraphernalia?"

"Because my father is rich and buys things for me."

"Well, man, isn't that all the same?"

"No, it is not. A person is rich if he has money that he has earned, or if he has money that has been given to him out and out—not because some of his friends are rich," replied Robert.

"What's the use of cutting and drying that way, boy? You'll grow up into a rich young man, and will enjoy yourself, and go to and give dinners, balls, suppers. How will you get on tied up by an old-fogy pledge? Who can have a dinner without wine and toasts and speeches, I say?"

"Then I won't have the dinners. It is not

necessary to have them, but I must keep my pledge."

"Don't you suppose temperance people have any dinners, or suppers, or any good time, Cocker?" asked North.

"No. They are a weakly, dull, sickly, short-lived lot."

"Oh! oh! oh! Where are your proofs?" cried North.

"Once I knew a man ninety years old," said Cocker, "and he told me that he had had a glass of rum every day all his life, so that proves it is healthy."

"And I knew a man," said Robert, "a man eighty years old, and he had lost both of his legs in a railroad accident when he was fifty, and that proves that it is healthy to lose your legs in a railroad accident, and if you want to live to be eighty, you should have your legs cut off."

All the boys who had gathered about laughed.

"See here," said North, "I never saw a merrier, jollier lot of men together than a lot of ministers, and you'll hardly find a minister that drinks. My father is president of an insurance company, and they won't take drinking-men risks. And the rates for habitual abstainers are less than for occasional drinkers. And the as-

surance societies, you know, have got it all down to a fine point."

"And I know this," said Robert, "the life assurance society called the Sceptic, in London, found that in twenty-four years the average of deaths among teetotalers was only five in a thousand yearly, and that is less than half the average of those who are not total abstainers. So, Cocker, you are all out about the temperance people being short-lived and sickly. Try your wits on another charge."

Sometimes Robert would forget his homesickness and talk in this way, or frolic heartily with the other lads, but too often he withdrew to a window-seat or a corner and sat alone, longing for Lal's Mountain. Nostalgia had seized on him. The daily walks of the boys, two and two, in line, a tutor at each end of the procession, were a misery to Robert, whose exercise had been so free of all restraint as he ranged the dear mountain and romped about the mill.

One day in the school session the lads in a class above Robert had a particularly hard problem in Measurement. Three failed on it at the board.

"Is there any boy in the school who can do this problem?" asked the teacher, intending to give the algebraists a chance to revive their arithmetical practice.

All the boys looked up, Robert among the rest.

"I can do it," said Robert.

"You! Why, it is way at the end of the book."

"Yes. But I have done it."

"Come up, and try it," said the teacher.

Robert went up to the board, wrought the example out, and the Principal came in just as he was explaining the problem and its working in admirable style.

"What, Murray, way along there so soon?" he said.

"I was along there a year ago," said Robert. "I went all through that arithmetic and reviewed. I worked out every example in it by myself."

"Then you should be in Algebra. You are very wrongly placed in that class in Interest. What other books have you been through?"

"I have been through all I am studying in now, only the Latin and French. I was in a more advanced Grammar than the one we use here. And I have been through the High-school Geography."

"Why did you not say so, and not be put back in that way?" demanded the Principal.

"No one asked me. I was told to go

in those classes because I did not know any Latin."

"We have graded on the Latin generally, but you are an exception. I will revise your classes to-day, Murray."

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. MURRAY'S CARD-HOUSES TUMBLE DOWN.

GREAT was Mr. Murray's joy when he found that Robert belonged in a higher class, and was not so backward in his studies as his teacher had supposed.

"I knew he had made a mistake," he said. "I knew my boy better than he did. People should not take so much for granted."

But Mr. Murray himself had been at the root of the teacher's error, for he had assured him that "Robert had been at a very poor school, where they taught absolutely nothing, and that he was far behind other boys of his age in all that he ought to know."

"Now, Robert," said the pleased father, "show them what you can do. Let them see how they have underestimated you. I wish you would try and take one of the prizes. How proud I should be of you if you would take all three! You know, there is the prize for good conduct, one for greatest improvement, one for highest class standing. Each is a gold medal,

or its worth, twenty dollars. Of course you would not take the money instead of the medal, but I will tell you what I will do. I will give you twenty dollars for each medal that you win."

An idea here entered Robert's mind. If he could get sixty dollars, and save his ten dollars a month, why could he not make a payment of one hundred and eighty dollars on that terrible mortgage that hung over the mill? If Mr. Wick would live long enough, or his heir should prove merciful, why, in five or six years, might not Robert free the dear home of its incumbrance? A very fury of money-earning and saving seemed to possess the boy at this thought. The mortgage was ever before his eyes, like some huge, hideous debt of his own. The rich man's son was burdened by poverty and cares of money as sorely as any poor man's son. The letters from the mill contained little hints unconsciously dropped, and spaces where Robert read dire poverty between the lines. "Father was so worried. Pink wished she were grown up, and knew enough to teach a school. She could then give poor father all her salary." It "was so good of Robert to send them those dresses. If he had not they could have had none. Now they looked as well at church as other folks." "Poor mother seemed low-spirited. Pink had

found her crying." "Mr. Wick had had another attack of paralysis—a slight one—but the doctor said the third would carry him off."

"People said Mr. Wick's nephew was in great want of ready money, and was all the time looking up purchasers to take all his uncle's property as soon as the old man should die."

Reading such news, Robert felt as if he could not wait for the slow process of his own accumulations. He ventured to ask his father for help.

"Father, would you give me a whole thousand dollars?"

"That depends upon how you would use it, son."

"I'd buy the mortgage on our mill, and give it up to mother and father Allen."

"Then I certainly should not give you money to use so."

"But, father, they were so good to me—and you used to like them so much."

"That was before I knew how abominably they were treating me. Think, Robert; for years I begged Captain Allen to give you up to me. I told him all my miserable story. I offered him money; all in vain. He refused to give me my own child."

"But, father, he did not know that I was your own child."

"He kept you after he knew. He came very near keeping you altogether, and letting me go off to die alone of a heart-break. He would have been my murderer. I remember against him my month of heartache, I can tell you. I will do nothing for him, I promise you."

This was on a Sunday afternoon. It was the Sunday of the month which Robert spent with his father. They had been at church in the morning, and the Scripture read had been, "I forgave thee all that debt because thou desirest me. Shouldst thou not have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" To Robert it seemed that the words fitted this case exactly. Oh! why did not his father so apply them? He dared not make the application himself, but he said, "It was because he was so fond of me, father."

"Yes, so fond that he was willing to keep you in patches, sleeping in a carpetless room, working along with that one-legged fellow, instead of putting you in your right place where you could have whatever you liked. A queer kind of love, that! And, Robert, I am amazed at you that you do not resent Captain Allen's keeping you parted so long from your own father. It is your duty to feel angry that he caused me so much needless sorrow. I wish

you would never speak of those Allens to me again."

Poor Robert! if he could have talked of them, could have seen them now and then; could have known that their goodness was appreciated and their burdens were lifted, he could have borne his separation from them better.

That had been a very happy life at the mill. In spite of poverty it had been a life of love and joy, a true home-lfe—free, genial, innocent. Robert longed for it, as the exile Switzer longs for his mountains, his herds, the chalet perilously hung on the cliff's side. He had now no hope of seeing his dear family until he should be grown up. Oh, weary years! He had no hope of relieving their straits but by the slow process of his own savings. He took up the burden, but it looked a long and hopeless way which it must be carried. And if he tried to pay the mortgage he could not educate Pink. He began morbidly to measure everything by the money which it cost, and that money by the good it might do to the Allens. On Saturdays his father took him to see what progress was made in the house that was being built for them in West Philadelphia. As Robert saw its large proportions and expensive work he counted up how many times it might have paid the mill

mortgage and built a good house for his dear, faithful mother Eliza, and he took but little satisfaction in the new structure.

As his father had assured him that progress at school was the high-road to speedy entrance into business and money-making on his own account, as the three prizes represented at least sixty of the dollars which he wanted, Robert entered into a very fury of application to his studies. He studied early and late. The boys called him a "prig," a "muff," and all manner of names because he refused to take a share in their sports. Even the tutor said, "Don't overdo this, Murray; you go from one extreme to the other."

Then, as Robert felt that he must save every penny, to aid in averting ruin from those who had saved him from misery, he spent nothing on little treats and gifts as the other boys did; he refused to join in testimonials; he put nothing into the outstretched palms of beggars; he took no share in surreptitious suppers called "spreads." The fellows called him a "cad," a "curmudgeon," a "miser." Robert knew that he was at an immense disadvantage; generous in the extreme, he was especially mortified and grieved at being considered selfish. All the consolation he had was in adding each month a clean, new ten-dollar bill to his hoard.

Desperate to help those so dear to him, the boy wrote to Deacon Britt, asking if he would not buy the mill mortgage, and take on it, from Robert, ten dollars a month, and whatever else he could pay. He asked the Deacon to keep his letters secret. The Deacon replied that he had not money in hand for this matter, but that he would look out, and try and avert the foreclosure of the mortgage. That little correspondence with the old Deacon was Robert's one venture through the secret post-office at the naughty stationer's.

At Christmas-time Mr. Murray took Robert to Atlantic City for a fortnight, to see the ocean, the great hotels, the fine cottages, and all the adjuncts of the huge, bustling summer-resort. Still the Allen preoccupation was over Robert's mind. If turned out from the mill, could father 'Zekiel come here, and be a fisherman, or sail pleasure-boats for summer parties? Could mother Eliza come here and keep a boarding-house? He laid all manner of plans, built castles in the air, and down they fell at the breath of common-sense. Father Allen knew nothing of fishing, or of the sea; mother 'Liza had no money to buy furniture for a cottage.

While Robert strolled on the beach and hopelessly revolved such plans as this, Mr. Murray

walking by him, too happy to notice the lad's unnatural silence and gloom, built castles also. In truth, Mr. Murray knew little about boys, and Robert's staid, quiet demeanor, the result of grief and care, only made him a more orderly listener, and better companion for his father. Thus Mr. Murray suspected nothing wrong. He planned and planned for Robert's almost heedless ears.

"In the summer, Robert, we will make a trip North. We will go down the St. Lawrence; we will see first Niagara, then the Thousand Islands, then Montreal and Quebec. That will be a trip! How would you like that, my boy?"

"Very well, father, thank you," said Robert, indifferently.

"Perhaps you have heard of some other place that you would prefer. Very likely the boys at school have told you of some of their vacation trips."

"No, sir."

"If there is any place you would prefer, speak up, my son."

"Oh, father! What I should prefer would be to go to Lal's Mountain for vacation. We could go to your nice little home there. Pink, and Bop, and the twins could come and see us every day. I could run in and out of the mill,

when I liked. We could have a camp, father, as the tourists and artists did. Oh, I should like that."

Robert held up his head; his brown eyes flamed, a glow lit his cheeks, he held his breath, waiting for his father's answer.

Mr. Murray was simply provoked.

"I certainly shall not go back to Lal's Mountain! We have both had too much of that place, and of those people. It is time you were weaned from them, Robert. You are absolutely foolish about them. I'm ashamed of you! It is proper for you to see more of the world. If you are so fond of the woods, boy," he added, relenting at Robert's miserable face, "we will go up and have all the camp you like in the Adirondacks, where you can catch salmon-trout and shoot venison."

Robert said no more. He hung his head, and kicked little shells out of the shingle. Life offered him nothing worth living for, except to lift the mortgage and build his mother a white house. But that was an undertaking for a sixteen-year-old boy! Presently, seeing some quite pretty shells, he thought Pink would like them. Pink had almost never seen shells. So he stuffed his pockets with the best, and as his desk was always kept supplied with postage-stamps,

he packed a box of shells, while his father was napping after dinner, and sent them off to Pink. Not that he wished to be secret, or do anything underhand; if it had come into question, he would have freely stated what had become of stamps and shells, but he saw that his father was only vexed at being reminded of the Allens, and that iteration of their claims only increased his hostility. Robert wished he could paint pictures, or write stories, or sing in a choir, or do something to earn money. But he was fully conscious of being no genius—only life's most ordinary paths were open to him. By no lofty tumblings could he reach his goal. He must just plod. He was glad when the vacation was over, and he could go back and plod again.

All this was very unnatural for a lad of Robert's age and constitution. He had been full of fun, frolic, given to vigorous out-of-door exercise. His childish "Let's play" had been a part of his buoyant constitution. Now his life was all work and worry and no play, and it began to tell heavily upon him.

"I think, Mr. Murray," said the proprietor of the hotel where Mr. Murray lived, and where Robert spent one Sunday a month, "that school-life does not suit that boy of yours. He is getting very thin."

"He is growing fast," said Mr. Murray.

"And he is pale—and has a worried look, and great dark circles under his eyes. I wonder you don't see it. He is a very different boy from what he was when you brought him here last fall. School-life doesn't suit him."

Mr. Murray, the next Saturday, took Robert to see a physician. The doctor said the boy was outgrowing his strength, and the change from country to school and city life had pulled him down. He ordered cod-liver oil and port wine.

"Port trash, you mean," cried Mr. Murray, "port old leather and logwood and wormy prunes, and drugs *ad libitum*. There is not a quart of true Port in the country, not a quart leaves Oporto, doctor, yet we Americans say we import it, and we drink it yearly by the hogshead! Why do you order what isn't to be had, and if it were to be had I wouldn't touch it, and Robert should not."

The doctor smiled at his irascible patient. He had had Mr. Murray to deal with before. But Mr. Murray was rich, and riches cover a multitude of sins and hard words. As Mr. Murray would none of the port wine, the doctor said:

"All right, give him an emulsion of cod-liver oil, and as you won't use port, use iron and

quinine, that will tone him up. Give him the iron through a glass tube, so as not to spoil those handsome teeth."

Mr. Murray took Robert a long drive up the Wissahickon, and bought him plentiful cod-liver oil, iron, and quinine.

"Port," he growled, "port wine, indeed! a pretty notion, giving that poison to a boy to strengthen him."

And also, Mr. Murray, though you did not know it, a pretty notion, a very pretty notion, to give a boy cod-liver oil and iron and quinine to heal a heart-break, and cure him of home-sickness, and chase dark care away that sits on his shoulder, croaking, "They shared all with you. They gave you a home; you are rich, you have more than all you need, and you are doing nothing for them, and they are to be turned out of the home you shared, the only home you ever knew, and which you loved so well."

No amount of cod-liver oil could exorcise this demon of care—no doses of iron and quinine could change this burthen of misery, this dirge of the fortunes of the mill, into a song of joy. Robert's spirits sank lower and lower in spite of the doctor's nostrums. Mr. Murray began to be astonished at the failure of potions. He did not know that while duly

taking his medicine, his son was losing sleep and appetite.

The letters from Lal's Mountain came every week. There were no complaints in them, but much that might be construed into ill news or forewarning of disaster. Mr. Wick was very low. Mr. Wick's nephew had been there with a man valuing property to look at the mill site. A freshet had brought some logs heavily down stream and broken a great piece from the wheel. That dear old wheel! Robert felt as if he had lost a piece of his own flesh in hearing that some of its sodden, mossy buckets had been carried away. What hours had he stood hand-in-hand with Pink gazing with childish wonder at that wheel's ceaseless revolutions, and laughing with glee at the rainbows flashing in its spray!.

"Father did not know whether it would be worth while to mend the wheel. Whatever happened, mother said they should all keep together."

Then in February came worse news. There had been a January break-up, and blocks of ice had come down the creek, as on the occasion of that famous voyage when Robert was captain of the *Fair-Weather* and Pink was crew. And a block of ice had cut a fearful hole in the old barge,—had indeed torn a great piece out of her stern,

and it was of no use to try and repair it. The barge was too worn-out for repairs. Besides, voyages did not pay now, and none of them felt much heart for taking one since Robert was gone. Even if they got to Philadelphia, they might not be allowed to see Robert.

However, the barge *Fair-Weather* was to be broken up and sold for fuel.

"The dear old barge, Robert, in which we have had such good times. I think we all cried to see it finally ruined."

After these mournful, loving, despairing letters, Robert would be more profoundly sad, and, while no longer neglecting his books to dream, would sit listless in play-hours and fail to eat his meals, and was a very forlorn-looking lad indeed.

All these signs of trouble did the Principal connect with the letters from Lal's Mountain. To these letters he objected *in toto*. He did not believe in much letter-writing for schoolboys. A weekly letter to mother, or sister, or father, or guardian, was enough for any reasonable boy. The Lal's Mountain letters were not very praiseworthy or improving specimens of English literature. The Principal resolved that they should be forbidden. But the first of March brought a letter longer and more pitiful than all

the rest. The Principal glanced at the six closely-written pages signed, "Your loving Pink." He did not read them; they were not worth it; but Mr. Murray would call that day, and he should order Robert to drop the Pink correspondence.

Robert read the letter,—a most dreadful letter it seemed to him,—full of the anguish of Pink's heart. Old Mr. Wick was dead:

"Buried yesterday, and Jonas his nephew has been here, and says he means to foreclose the mortgage, and we must go in one month. At that time the property will be sold to a man from New York, who means to build a summer hotel here on the mill site. He is going to tear the dear old mill down, and we will not get any money for it. They say the ground will only bring the value of the mortgage. We shall not have a penny, and we do not know where we shall go. In a little while I shall not know where to tell you to direct my letters. Oh, I'm so glad, dear Robert, that you have a home, and are not to be turned out as we are. If we had any furniture, perhaps we could go to Lacy and take boarders. Father says maybe we should get a couple of rooms from the Britts and let him go West to look for something. But, you know, father has no money to go West, and he cannot

get along without mother. Father takes after me; he cannot do sums. Since you have been away, Robert, all my sums have been wrong. I am so sorry, for if I could do sums, perhaps I could be a school-teacher sometime, and earn as much as thirty dollars a month to give to poor, dear mother."

This was the heart-rending epistle which Robert read and re-read, until it seemed as if all the letters burned in red fire. While he read it the Principal talked to Mr. Murray.

"It is true, Robert is not looking well. I think he will never feel or look well as long as he keeps up his correspondence with those Allen people. He is perceptibly more listless and moody after every letter. Really, Mr. Murray, you should forbid the correspondence."

"It would make the poor boy so unhappy."

"Only for a little while. He would soon forget. Boys always do. Now his mind is distracted and his attention diverted by those letters all the time. Next thing, he will fancy himself in love with this Pink. I assure you, you do him a great injury when you let him keep this thing up. In school, nothing but school-ideas should be tolerated."

"Well, perhaps so; but I hate to grieve Robert."

"He'll be over it in a week. Take him to Washington for his spring holidays. Show him

the Patent Office, the Congressional Library, the Smithsonian,—you can make it as improving as a fortnight in school."

Mr. Murray suspected that this might not be a very enlivening holiday.

"The longer this goes on, the worse and harder it will be. You tell me you want to break the boy away from this family, who are not advantageous acquaintances. Then do it promptly. I understand boys, and I advise you for your son's benefit. Let him have an undivided mind for his books."

"Very well. I'll speak to him about it this afternoon."

"I will send for him to come to you presently," said the Principal. "Meanwhile I wish to tell you——"

Here the Principal was called out to see a telegram that had come for some one of his boys.

Mr. Murray sat dreading his interview with Robert. How could he forbid the letters on which Robert's heart was so set?

Suddenly the door was flung open almost against him as he sat.

"Mr. Mason! Mr. Mason!" cried the excited voice of the tutor, "will you telephone for a doctor for young Murray? He is in an awful way. Quick, sir! I fear he is dying."

CHAPTER XVIII. .

BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

By this time the young tutor, pale and at his wits' end, had got fairly into the room and saw —not Mr. Mason, the Principal—but the father of "young Murray."

Mr. Murray rose up from his chair behind the door. His teeth chattered, his body shook as with ague, a cold sweat poured over his face. He could not utter a word, but, with eyes wide and full of agony, glared at the frightened tutor, who had just said that Robert was dying.

"Are you there, sir? Come, come to Robert! Where is Mr. Mason? We must have a doctor. This way, sir. The fellows are carrying Robert to the infirmary."

The tutor had lost all his presence of mind. He dashed back into the hall and Mr. Murray followed him. Ascending the stairs, he saw six of the largest pupils carrying an inert form—the form of his son. He saw the boy's hands dangling lifeless,—and what a dead weight he was on his comrades' young arms!

"There's poor Murray's father," said North.

Already it was "poor Murray"!

The tutor had rushed off to seek the Principal, and Mr. Murray, dazed with misery, climbed the stairs after those who carried his son. The boys went on and on, up to the infirmary in the fourth story.

It was a large, light, sunny, well-aired, silent, beautiful room, with great, soft, invalid chairs and two white beds. On one of these beds the boys laid Robert, and began, under North's direction, to get off his shoes, coat, and necktie. Mr. Murray bent over him, too distracted to aid in undressing him.

Robert's face was pallid; his eyelids, half closed, showed that the eyes were set and rolled upward; his beautiful, curly, dark hair was damp with a cold sweat. Mr. Murray wondered to see how thin and white and wan the lately robust boy had become. How wonderfully like his poor, dead mother he looked as she had been in her last illness and in her coffin! He could do nothing but clasp and stroke Robert's unconscious head and call him:

"Robert! Robert! My dear son! Robert, speak to me!"

"Robert's governor takes it uncommon hard, don't he?" whispered one lad to another, in the

corner of the infirmary. "Looks just as if he was going to die, don't he, poor chap!"

Up came tutor and Principal and a doctor. The doctor was a very young man, and Mr. Murray eyed him with suspicion, as he drew near the bed, in which the boys, aided by the matron, had now placed Robert.

"Doctor Lee, Mr. Murray," said the Principal. "He is attending a cousin of his, here in the next room, young Morgan, who has a slight attack of lung fever. I found Doctor Lee at the door, just coming to see Morgan, and I brought him to Robert at once. We can send for your own doctor presently, if you prefer."

Mr. Murray stepped back a little, making way for Doctor Lee, who began to examine his patient.

"He seems very much prostrated. Nervous system quite run down; his pulse is very weak and wiry. Brain fever. How was he taken? Did anything happen?"

"We were reading our letters," said North. "Murray read his three times. I noticed him, he looked queer, and all at once began to cry out, not words, but queer little shrieks, and roll his eyes, and then, all in a minute, he fell over against the desk. It was something about his

letter, I think. See, here is his letter in his hand now—all crumpled up."

"I told you so," said the Principal, taking Pink's melancholy pages from Robert's unresisting hand, and giving them to Mr. Murray.

"The boy has evidently got into a very low state, and had a nervous shock of some kind. I saw a case just like this, when I was a schoolboy,—all came from intense home-sickness and sudden news of a sister's death. It was that case first turned my attention to the study of medicine. Get me these things which I have written down at once, please, Mr. Mason. Have you an ice-bag? Ice? Clear the room, have those curtains drawn. This side of the house must be kept very quiet. Is this the young gentleman's father? Do not despair, sir. Your son is young, and seems to have a very fine physique. We shall pull him through, I hope."

Only hope—when this distracted man wanted certainty, assurance! It had never once entered into Mr. Murray's mind that his son might die. He had lost him for years, and suffered horrible misery. He had found him; he expected to keep him forever. He should not bury Robert,—Robert, a man of middle age, should bury him; and here was this treasured boy, lying near to death. The young doctor seemed to under-

stand the case, and to be very earnest and sympathetic; he toiled over his patient; had a hospital nurse sent for; praised Robert's beauty; encouraged poor Mr. Murray.

Mr. Murray could not be persuaded to leave Robert's bed for a second. He drank a cup of tea that was brought him, and sat by the bed to share the watch of the nurse. Robert moaned, tossed, muttered. During the night, Mr. Murray thought of the letter which had been given to him. He would see what it was that had so disastrously affected Robert. He went into the hall, and read it by the gas. The simple letter filled him with strange pity and contrition; no wonder that Robert had felt nearly frantic over this, when he loved them so! Early in the morning Mr. Murray went to the bed-room which Mr. Mason put at his service and there he had Robert's things brought, and instead of lying down to rest, looked over his boy's treasures. There were the other letters from the mill. Mr. Murray, as he read them, could trace the progress of Robert's distress. And there, worse than all, was a little journal or book, where Robert had solaced himself by writing down what he wanted to do for his dear "father, mother, Pink, and the rest,"—how much it would cost, how long it would take him to

save up the money. There were notes of boyish impossible plans for getting more money, and other notes telling how much he owed those who had been all the world to him. There were words also of regret because the "dear father who was so kind to him would not be friends with those whom he loved best in all the world." These things cut Mr. Murray to the heart. The sorrow of poor Robert was revealed to him, and his own conduct to the Allens stood before him in all the baseness of its ingratitude. He was amazed at himself. Should he now lose his son by the judgment of God?

All that day and night as Robert tossed and raved, Mr. Murray more and more upbraided himself for his ingratitude. He heard Robert in his delirium calling on "father," when 'father' meant Captain 'Zekiel, but now he was not angry—only pitiful. But Robert's chief cry was for Eliza.

"Mother, why don't you come to me? Can't you stop my headache? Take hold of my head as you used to do. Don't you care for me any more because I don't belong to you? Are you all dead? Have you gone away and starved? Have they put you all in the poorhouse? Pink, why don't you sing to me? If you'd sing to me, I could go to sleep. Pink, sing, and make my headache stop. Mother! mother!"

"Why do you not send for his mother?" said Dr. Lee. "A mother would do him more good than all the nurses and doctors put together. You should lose no time. He is very ill, and grows worse. His mother should be here."

"He has no mother," said Mr. Mason.

"He is calling for his adopted mother," said Mr. Murray.

"Has he lived long with her?"

"Ever since he can remember, until the last few months, and Pink is her little daughter. He is very fond of them."

"Such affections are often as strong as ties of blood," said the doctor. "This boy is evidently very sensitive. I should say he had been mourning and fretting for these friends until he has brought on this sickness."

"He is just like his own mother," said Mr. Murray. "She died of grief for a lost child."

"Then you had better take especial care of this lad now, and get the people whom he is calling after, here. It is not in humanity to stand such tossing and raving as this very long. He will wear himself out. He grows weaker. Anything now to quiet him."

Mr. Murray hastened out and sent a telegram to Captain Allen, bidding him bring Mrs. Allen

and Pink at once, as Robert was dangerously ill. He also sent a money-order telegram for fifty dollars, so that there should be no delay.

The rest of the afternoon and all the night, getting only brief snatches of sleep, as Robert fell into transient states of stupor, did Mr. Murray watch by his son. He had plenty of time for repenting; plenty of time to think what he might have done, and to plan what he would do if God should restore his boy. How he recalled the piteous pleading in Robert's brown eyes as he begged to go to Lal's Mountain for the summer. A "yes" then, the hope of that return, might have saved all this. Then, too, Robert had asked so wistfully for money to lift that mortgage, which seemed to rest as heavily on his young heart as on the Allen mill, and how harshly he had been refused! Mr. Murray seemed to himself a monster.

But as the gray, March morning dawned, Robert's heart-breaking cries, "Mother, mother, come help me!" were suddenly quieted, for the door opened and softly across the room came Eliza Allen. She knelt on a stool by Robert's bed and took his burning head in her arms and stroked and soothed his forehead with those work-worn hands, which were yet so soft and so motherly in touch.

Robert ceased to call, "Father, father, I am falling! Hold me! the mill is whirling about! It is going over the bank!" for Captain Allen took in his strong grasp the gesticulating, dry hands, and his genial, firm voice said:

"Here I am, my son. We are all right. The mill stands firm, Robert."

And there was no longer need for the sick boy to implore, "Pink, sing. Why don't you sing to me? Pink, you sing just like a bird," for Pink sat on the other side of the bed and put her little hand on Robert's thin cheek, and in her fresh voice, untrained but true and sweet, sang the simple things which Robert loved to hear: "Blue Juniata," "Buy a Broom," "Oft in the Stilly Night," and the hymn that they all had sung together at the mill on Sunday evenings, "O Paradise, O Paradise."

And so, soothed, caressed, sung to, feeling the subtle influence of their presence whom he loved, Robert grew quieter and sank into slumber.

Mr. Murray stood at the foot of the bed, and watched his son, as he lay surrounded and ministered to by that family of whom he had been so strangely jealous. But there was no jealousy in his heart now, it was all driven out by a terrible fear. He was willing to share Robert now

with all the world, if so be he might have any part at all of him left. His heart blessed those who came with help, and possible healing. Hereafter he would never be able to do enough for them, if only Robert might live. And the Allens, ministering to Robert, seemed to have not the least rancor toward the poor Superintendent, who had dragged Robert from them so furiously, giving them no word of thanks, but calling them hard names instead. Captain Allen nodded encouragement to Mr. Murray, as Robert fell asleep. Eliza sent glances of sympathy and pity to the white, haggard, unhappy parent. Pink tried to give him hopeful smiles, while tears were running down her rosy, dimpled cheeks. At that instant, far from saying that Pink had red hair, and was not a pretty girl, Mr. Murray was ready to affirm that she had locks of spun gold and the countenance of a cherub.

The Allens had travelled all through a stormy March night, and had taken no food; yet, as hour followed hour, they never flinched from their post, lest Robert's sleep should be disturbed. Eliza held her boy still in seemingly tireless arms; Captain 'Zekiel stood at his post with the constancy of a caryatid; Pink's voice dropped lower and lower to suit the needs of

slumber, but still she sang on. The superseded hospital nurse remembered their necessities. She brought a cup of beef-tea and held it to Eliza's lips, then treated the Captain to coffee in the same fashion, and then Eliza's voice stole into Pink's low song, so that Pink might stop long enough to have something to eat. And then Pink gently left her place, and drew a big chair to just the spot where Mr. Murray could best watch Robert, and made him sit down there and drink some coffee, and lean back his head on a pillow, and have his tired face bathed with cologne, and an afghan tucked all about his knees and hands, for Pink was a capital little nurse, and then she whispered in his ear, "Dear Mr. Murray, please don't look so miserable; I know Robert is going to get well. See how nicely he sleeps. You sleep too, please." And so she went back to her place and her singing, while Mr. Murray thought this little girl in the blue and black plaid, plainly-made gown—poor Robert's gift—was certainly the most delightful creature; why, why had he not carried her, too, off from the mill when he took Robert?

It was noon before Robert roused and moved, and released his willing prisoners. Then he was not in his senses, and seemed to recognize no one, but his cries for "father," "mother,"

"Pink," were stilled. He recognized their presence in so far as that he would not let the nurse touch him or feed him, but yielded calmly when Eliza bathed his face and arms, combed his hair, and gave him broth. The fury of his fever and restlessness was ended; it only needed the touch of Eliza's hands, or a few notes of Pink's songs, to quiet his tossings and still his mutterings. The nurse had only to wait on those whom the sick tyrant permitted to wait upon him. When he began to talk about Bop and Jerry and the mill, Captain 'Zekiel knew just what to say to him. Between whiles, in the next room, the Captain passed the hours encouraging Mr. Murray, by vowing that "Robert would surely get well, never was there such a master-hand with the sick as 'Liza was." And he told Mr. Murray tales of Robert's childhood. Now, for the first time, did the Superintendent hear the true story of how the Captain had found and brought home his Bargain. All the little anecdotes of Robert's childish goodness, courage, wit, and beauty were detailed by the good Captain, and eagerly heard by the Superintendent. And now that sorrow and fear had opened Mr. Murray's eyes, he learned from these stories that which the Captain had not thought of teaching,—the depth of affection existing be-

tween Robert and his foster-parents, and all the generous love and self-denying care which they had lavished upon him. He told himself that he had been a demon to abuse these noble people, and to give them hostility instead of gratitude.

Finally the force of Robert's fever was broken, but now he lay in a state of exhaustion, near to death, from extreme weakness.

"We must build him up," said Dr. Lee. "Get the best old bourbon or apple-whiskey and give it to him, a teaspoon of whiskey in two tablespoons of rich, new milk. Begin with it once in five hours, then get to once in three."

"But, doctor," said Mr. Murray, "I don't want to give my son any kind of whiskey. I don't believe in it. Is there not something else to strengthen him?"

"Why, Mr. Murray, he is not in a state to know what he is taking. You can't cultivate a taste in him now."

"But I don't believe in alcohol as a medicine."

"I am giving you the best I know, sir; I have done my best in the case from the first," said Dr. Lee, who was full of pride at his successful treatment of Robert.

The great doctor from the city had come out

and approved his course, and, after two calls, had left the case with him. The young doctor was elated. Moreover, he was one of those who advocate alcohol as a medicine.

"Doctor," said Mr. Murray, earnestly, "I feel deeply about this. When I was Robert's age I nearly died of typhoid fever, and, in the subsequent prostration, they gave me brandy and whiskey, which begot a taste for drink. I might far better have died. My love of drink cursed my existence, killed my wife, nearly destroyed my child. I cannot have that story repeated in Robert."

"Never fear, it will not be. It was a most unusual case, I should say. They kept up the dose too long, probably."

"Can you not think of something better than the whiskey?" said Mr. Murray, appealing to the nurse.

"I never interfere with the physician in charge," said the nurse.

Mr. Murray looked to Eliza.

"What do you say?"

"I never give liquor of any kind," said Eliza, promptly. "I do not think it right. It is against my temperance principles."

"Temperance is a question of morals, and should not be dragged into the domain of medi-

cine," said Dr. Lee. "Those who know nothing of medicine should not handicap a doctor with either whims or moral principles, but let him do his best. Have confidence in me, Mr. Murray. I am more than interested in your son."

But Eliza drew near the troubled father and said in his ear:

"Oh, Mr. Murray, don't yield. Remember Robert is your son, and a taste that was in you may lie in him, and your story may come to be his story. Oh, do be firm. I know there must be some safer treatment."

"If you have no confidence in me, sir," began Dr. Lee in a vexed tone,—"if you question my judgment——"

"I have confidence in you—every confidence; but I beg of you, doctor, consult your reading, your experience, can you not prescribe something else?"

Dr. Lee was angry.

"No, I cannot," he said, sharply.

"Claude, you can."

The voice that spoke was sweet, but imperious. The door into the next room where young Morgan was, was open, and a lady stood on the threshold.

"Claude, how often have you and I fought

this battle! You know that I will not allow you to give Paul alcohol. You know I have proved to you again and again that alcohol is not needed in medical practice."

"Aunt!" cried Dr. Lee, between rage and respect.

"Yes, aunt; and a very nice aunt I am, young man, and one for you to be truly proud of, as I know you are. It is cruel of you to try and force this father to give to his son a dangerous poison. You are young and inexperienced, my good Claude, but you do know of other remedies than alcohol for building up prostrated strength. Did I not bring you through nervous prostration and typhoid fever without a drop of distilled or fermented poison? Do you not know that for years the Temperance Hospital of London has had the lowest hospital death-rate on record, and there, nothing alcoholic is used? Why, Claude, will you insist on trying to build up life on a substructure of death?"

"Well, aunt, if you mean to take this case out of my hands, and if Mr. Murray wishes it——"

"My dear Claude, we neither of us wish anything of the kind. We want you to drop for the nonce, at least, your crotchet about the medicinal virtues of alcohol and doctor this pretty lad

on temperance lines. You know, Claude, you would have to doctor Paul that way."

"Do me the favor, doctor," pleaded Mr. Murray.

"Well, take your own risk," said the doctor with a half laugh. "When my aunt enters the lists—right or wrong—all her opponents have to fly. There! have that prescription made up; and as for diet, since my aunt and Mrs. Allen consider themselves so well able to dictate and decide, let them take the matter in hand. But, Mr. Murray, if Robert sinks——"

Mr. Murray turned pale.

"He won't sink," said the valiant Mrs. Morgan.

"It will not be my fault if he does, remember."

"And you will not fail to claim all the honors when he goes out bright and well," said Mrs. Morgan. "My dear Claude, if Mr. Murray will allow me to come into this case as adviser on diet, I mean to keep an exact record of the kind, amount, and preparation of all the food and tonics which we use, so that you will have it for a similar case. We shall remember the pendulum-principle, Claude, and not stimulate way up one hour to provoke an equal rebound the next hour. We mean to have a steady non-alcoholic rise."

CHAPTER XIX.

JUNE SUNSHINE.

ROBERT travelled slowly up the ascent from death to life and consciousness. As his loss of health had been gradual, in slow heart-sickness, so his restoration was tedious and protracted, but it was sound and steady. He did not make a gain one day or hour, to lose it the next. The nurse went away, and Mrs. Allen, Pink, and Mrs. Morgan did the nursing. Mr. Murray and Captain 'Zekiel spent the time walking up and down the school-grounds, or up and down the road, coming in every hour to see how the invalid was. The two men were in strictest amity. Mr. Murray had forgiven Captain Allen for keeping his son, and Captain Allen had forgotten that Mr. Murray had called him "a villain, a scoundrel, a thief." They went together to see the house Mr. Murray was building.

"If Robert had died, I should have had everything stop, just where it is; and I should soon have died myself," said the Superintendent.

"Keep a good heart," said Captain 'Zekiel,

"Robert will not die. You will see him a man in no time, as stout and as strong as I am."

Finally Robert opened his eyes, and was fully conscious. The mists had passed from his brain. There sat Eliza looking at him.

"Mother! Mother!" he cried, holding out both his wasted hands to her, his eyes full of joy.

"Yes, dear boy, here I am," said Eliza, kissing him.

Then a cloud came over Robert's face.

"Oh, mother, is the mortgage foreclosed? Are you all turned out of our home, are you all scattered? Has poor father gone West? Is the mill torn down?"

"No, no, my boy," said Mr. Murray, leaning over him. "You have been sick, that is all, and your mother came to nurse you. A pretty lad you are, to make us all this trouble, and fetch her from home to look after you. But, cheer up now, for she will stay until you can go home with her to Lal's Mountain."

"Oh, father, do you mean it? Can I go up there, and see all of them? But the mill—it is to be torn down—father is to lose the mill—and the barge is broken up, and the wheel is ruined by the ice, and—and——"

"And what a pack of nonsense this is that

you are talking!" said his father, cheerfully. "Are you dreaming still? Captain Allen leave the mill! No, indeed; why should he, when he owns every stick and timber of it, and all the ground it stands on? The barge broken up! Well, it is, only to make a nice new one. The wheel ruined! Why, the mill is to be put in splendid order, and Captain Allen is going to build a house as soon as you are well enough to lay the corner-stone for him."

"But the mortgage, father, isn't the mortgage to be foreclosed? Is not a New York man to have the mill?"

"Come, come, a boy of your age should know nothing about mortgages! The mortgage—do you mean this slip of paper?" and Mr. Murray put a folded paper in Robert's hands—"if that is your nightmare, my dear boy, make an end of it, give it to your mother here to light the fire with."

Eliza heard as if dreaming. Anxiety for Robert had for two weeks kept in the background of her thoughts the imminent ruin of her home. What did Mr. Murray mean?—was this that dreadful mortgage?

"Or let Pink have it for curl-papers," said Mr. Murray.

"Pink doesn't use curl-papers. Her curls are

natural," said Robert, laughing. "How is Pink? Oh, I wish I could see Pink."

"So you can," said his father. "She will be here in a minute. She has been singing to you and feeding you for the last two weeks."

"Is Pink here too? But how will father get on if Pink and mother are both gone?" cried Robert.

"He could not get on, so he came too. You seem to be a very important young man, Robert. It takes a whole family to nurse you. I see Captain Allen and Pink coming up the walk now."

"But who is at the mill? Who takes care of the twins?"

"Jerry and Bop and the twins are keeping house together, and the twins have promised to be very good if you would only get well and go back to see them," said his mother.

Then the door opened, and in came Pink and the big Captain.

"Oh, Robert is awake and knows us!" cried Pink, hastening to him. "Robert, are you better? Oh, Robert, I am so glad!"

"I'll be well in no time, and I'll go home with you, and see you build the new house and a new barge and repair the mill. Oh, won't we have a good time!" said Robert, holding both Captain Allen's hands.

The Captain's face fell. In his care for Robert, he, too, had put the home-troubles out of his mind; but now—in two weeks or less—they must go from their home; his hereditary mill would be his no longer.

"There's the mortgage, you know. Mother's got it to burn up,—hateful old paper! Let me see you tear it, father."

Was Robert still raving? Captain Allen took the paper that Eliza held out to him. What was it? It was the mortgage, surely, if the endorsement on the fold said truly.

"Robert gives it to you as a token of his love and of his and my gratitude," said Mr. Murray. "Open it, Captain, and see if it is all right."

Captain Allen opened it. It was right and more than right. There folded in it was a check for two thousand dollars. The Captain gasped. Never before had he handled such a sum of money at one time.

"This—this is too much. I cannot—we should not——"

"Nonsense, Captain. Don't you remember once I offered you the mortgage and two thousand dollars for the boy? You gave him to me. I must keep my share of the bargain."

"I did not give him to you," faltered the Cap-

tain. "He was your own, and you took him; I had no right to him."

"We will share him hereafter; he belongs to us both," said Mr. Murray. "And this little matter of the mortgage and of the money for a home and repairs is not a question of dollars between us, Allen. It is a token of my gratitude and of Robert's love. You gave him a home—he gives you a home. You shared all with him—it is his privilege to share his with you. You saved him from ruin—he tries to return the debt in some small measure. Whatever he does—whatever I do, we cannot show the measure of our gratitude."

Tears were in all their eyes. This was a beautiful occasion. Robert was almost well. The mill was safe!

"Haven't I got the best father in the world?" cried Robert. "Didn't I tell you how good he was to me? It seems as if I could say nothing but, 'The mortgage is paid! the mortgage is paid!' It goes just like a song."

"Come, you must stop saying that and everything else. Pink, where is the calves'-foot jelly?" cried Eliza. "We shall have this boy worse again after so much excitement. 'Zekiel, you had better go and write a letter to Bop and Jerry. Mr. Murray, we should draw the cur-

tains and make Robert go to sleep. Pink, you may go and play dominoes or 'fox and geese' with Paul Morgan; his mother says he is very peevish to-day. He has been shut up in his room so long, he is tired of it. Now, Robert, let us hear no more of you for the next two hours!"

Robert did not wish to be heard from. It was enough—more than enough—to be able to lie there and think that his great burden had rolled away. The mill was safe; his mother should have a house—a white house with a veranda. His father was friends with his foster-parents, and he was to go back to Lal's Mountain. He lay quite still, thinking how that house should be built, until he fell asleep, wandering through rooms whose shadowy walls changed, enlarged, shrank, as his fancy varied.

Next day young Morgan was able to go down-stairs. Soon his mother would take him home. And Robert was now much stronger, sitting pillowed up in his bed, and developing a marvellous appetite for chicken-broth. Mrs. Morgan would be no longer needed to reinforce Eliza in the case. The temperance treatment had been a splendid success.

"What do you think of non-alcoholic treatment now, Claude?" Mrs. Morgan asked her nephew, as she pointed to Robert and Paul.

"Well, aunt, you have succeeded finely, but you are a wonderful nurse and a miracle in sick-room cookery, as I know to my advantage," said Dr. Lee.

"I should succeed every time where the disease was not beyond any human help. Why, Claude, should we create a fictitious strength? By the law of action and reaction the system must fall to a point as far below the normal as it was forced above it. Why exhaust slowly-returning strength by driving the feeble heart to unnatural work? why, when the blood is weak from sickness, send into it an agent which shall eat up the red corpuscles that are needed to build up the body? why stimulate the tired brain? why excite the jaded nerves? why not look to Nature's way and give rest, complete quiet, and food,—food that will build up evenly and slowly and surely every hour? True, using alcohols, your patient may get well. Many a patient gets well in spite of the medicine, not in virtue of it. And is it not a satisfaction to feel that your recovered patient has not in him the seeds of your planting of future disease, or worse, of a dangerous appetite,—a cause of future crime? Mr. Murray has said I might tell you all his story, and I will soon. He hopes that it may make of you a temperance doctor.

Young Galens such as you, should be abreast with the best of your age. The temperance doctor will be the doctor of the future. A young man should be glad to be a pioneer in all that is wise and good. Have you read all the books and pamphlets on this subject,—the statistics which I have given you?"

"I am reading them. If I perish, I shall not perish unwarned," said Dr. Lee, smiling.

"It is your patients which will perish if you do not take warning. A doctor cannot be wise or foolish for one alone; he holds many lives in his hands."

"That is true," said the young doctor, gravely.

If the days of illness had been dark and terrible, the days of convalescence were most cheery and beautiful. Captain Ezekiel went home; Mr. Murray went with him, but came back in three days. Mother Eliza and Pink stayed to take care of Robert. Robert sat up in bed and listened to Pink's tales of all that had happened at Lal's Mountain since the autumn. Then Pink must unpack the trunk and see all the wonderful presents which Robert's father had heaped upon him. Then the pocket-book was taken out, and there were forty dollars, Robert's savings, and nothing would do but Eliza must go out with Pink and buy spring hats and jackets,

gloves and boots, and handkerchiefs and collars for both.

"I want you to look nice when the boys come up to see me," pleaded Robert.

Then there were hours when Pink read to Robert, and other hours when she placed a drawing-board on the bed and played dominoes and jack-straws with him, and they could afford to laugh when Robert's hand would shake so that the straws were forfeit every time.

"Lal's Mountain will steady your hand," said Pink.

Then Robert could sit up in one of the great chairs. His father ordered the most gorgeous wrapper and slippers. And now his diet was liberally increased, and a table was set beside his chair, and Pink shared with him the most delicious feasts of chicken, mushrooms, fruit, jellies. What feasting, what joy!

Then the boys came up to call on the convalescent Robert. Boys are sympathetic creatures in the main, and, no matter how heavily they "are down on a fellow," let the fellow get into trouble, fall ill, be near to death,—they at once forgive all his iniquities. Robert had failed to be popular among his mates at boarding-school. He had been moody, studied out of hours, and seemed stingy.

North was the first boy admitted to the infirmary.

"Glad to you see up, Murray. I declare, you look much brighter than you did before you fell sick. Brain fever seems to have done you good, man. The fellows all sent their regards; they are dreadfully sorry for you."

"That's kind of them, but they needn't be sorry for me. I never was happier in my life. I didn't think the boys liked me very well, North," said Robert.

"Oh, well, now," said North, uneasily, under the straight look of Robert's brown eyes, "all fellows have their own ways, you know. For my part I don't think it is any of our business whether you or any one does like the rest of us or not. Of course," added North, floundering more and more, "we have no right to expect that a fellow should join the games if he don't feel like it, or give treats, or spend his money if he don't wish to."

"I know what you all mean," said Pink, who was standing by Robert's chair. "You thought Robert cross because he did not do as the rest did, and stingy because he saved up all his money. Robert, was not that forty dollars——"

"Hush, Pink; never mind. It's done."

"I won't hush," said Eliza's daughter. "Mr. Murray told me all about it. Robert would not take time for the games because he wanted to get the three prizes, and he wanted the three prizes for the sixty dollars, and he was saving——"

"I say, Pink, hold up, will you?" cried Robert.

"No, Robert, I won't.—He was not saving the money for himself, or because he was greedy. It was for us. We were poor and had a mortgage on our house, and we were to lose the mill because we could not pay, and Robert was trying to get money to pay the mortgage for us. He tried to save every cent,—all for us. And now his father has paid it all off, and Robert gave mother and me the money that he had saved, and he made us buy things for ourselves. I bought these boots. I never had a pair so nice before. You see, Robert got lost when he was little, and my father found him and adopted him, and he thinks that is a reason for doing everything for us."

"I ought to think so," said Robert, who had vainly tried by nudges and pokes to stop Pink's eloquence. "North, they did everything for me. I shared all they had. They went without things to get me things. They worked for me. They

sat up nights with me when I was sick. They loved me just like their own. It would be queer if I could not do a little thing like that for them."

"I say it was fine," cried North, charmed with this explanation and with Pink's fervid championship. "I say it was fine all round!"

The next day, when the matron came to pay her regular morning visit to the invalid, she brought a splendid bouquet of hot-house flowers, "Sent by the boys to Master Murray."

Not a word further was ever spoken about previous misunderstandings. The boys and Robert thought that the flowers had fully expressed all that was proper to be said on the occasion.

And now Pink and Robert spent hours, sheets of paper, red ink and black ink, and words innumerable, upon plans for the new house to be built on the long-selected site near the mill. Seven rooms, a veranda, an outside kitchen, this house must have. They drew plan after plan. One very choice plan, on being presented to "the woman-with-a-head-on-her-shoulders," was found, though containing only seven rooms, to be about as large as a hotel. Another *chef d'œuvre* unluckily omitted the staircase altogether, and gave no access to the

cellar except by going entirely round the house outside. Another was deemed perfect, until it was found that every room was hermetically sealed as to doorways, and there would be no way of entrance except by ladders and through the windows. Pink was therefore discarded as assistant architect, and, Eliza and Robert going into partnership, produced a very nice plan, which Mr. Murray carried off to Lal's Mountain.

From Lal's Mountain came the most delightful news. The New York man, who had been disappointed about securing the mill, did not resign his notion of a summer hotel. He bought a spot half a mile higher up the creek and went to work in haste. The new building would furnish work for the Captain, Jerry, and Bop. Besides, they would work on their own new home, and on repairs on the mill, and the present living-rooms were to be turned into a good carpenter's shop. As for the barge, that was to be replaced by a smaller, handsomer, less cumbersome craft, with a little steam-engine using coal-oil for fuel, and this craft was to be used as a pleasure-boat for the boarders and tourists, and it was supposed that Jerry and Bop as captain and crew would harvest shekels.

Captain 'Zekiel wrote that the twins had

turned over a new leaf and behaved beautifully in their joy of new fortunes. The girl cooked and kept house almost as well as Pink, and her twin-brother made fires, fed the fowls, cleaned the windows and garden, and kept Robert as a model before his eyes.

"Father will have to make us some new furniture," said Pink, "everybody has outgrown the old trundle-beds. But we have the two carpets that mother and Jerry made, and they will do for our best rooms, that's one comfort."

Whereupon Robert burst into hilarious laughter.

Finally, by the middle of April, Robert was pronounced quite well. Doctor Lee thought he should remain in the city until June, and do no more studying until fall.

"I've made poor work of school-life this year, father," said Robert, "but next fall I'll come back and get on all right. I like this school and the fellows first-rate now."

"The failure was all my fault," said his father, "and what do you want to do for a business, Robert?"

"I want to go into business," said Robert, "into the lumber business, if you don't mind. I've been among the mills and the lumber all my life. I can't tell you how I like a lumber-

yard. The smell of all the wood makes me think of the forests, and the logging-camps, and log-drives, and the mills, and the water-wheels. You won't mind, will you? I really feel sure I haven't the making of a President of any kind in me. I am a very common person."

Mr. Murray laughed.

"Be what you like, so that you do honestly and well, whatever work you undertake."

Then Eliza and Pink went back to Lal's Mountain, and left Robert to come with the June sunshine.

CHAPTER XX.

MR. MURRAY BUILDS BETTER HOUSES.

MR. MURRAY'S new house was finished and the furnishing began. A happy chance brought Mrs. Morgan to the city, and she became chief adviser and aid in that buying. But to Robert the most delightful part of it was that he was buying not only for his own room in the West Philadelphia house, but for that dear new seven-room house at Lal's Mountain. In the excess of his joy he would have bought plush chairs, or pictures nearly as large as the humble walls, and have left out simple kitchen appurtenances altogether. But Mrs. Morgan saved him from such indiscretions. She expounded that the house on Lal's Mountain should be furnished to suit Lal's Mountain, and that as Eliza did her own work, her furnishings should not make work burdensome. But the rag-carpets were relegated to the kitchen and the boys' bed-room, and the parlor had a Brussels carpet, a parlor organ, and a little book-case, filled with just the right books for every one. Never was human being hap-

pier than Robert over every separate set of cottage-furniture, over every chair and table, over the hogshead packed with crockery. Mr. Murray grew ten years younger in witnessing his son's ecstasies. Perhaps, also, his rejuvenation was partly due to the expansion of his own heart in deeds of just liberality, in expression of gratitude; for there is nothing does us so much good as the exercise of these virtues. "He who giveth, groweth like his God."

"You seemed to take comparatively little interest in our shopping last fall, Robert, but now you are mad with joy."

"Yes, but that was only for me; and I had never felt the need of the things I was getting. Besides, then I was so stunned at losing my old home and family I could only think of them. Now I am as happy as I can be."

Indeed, Mr. Murray did not find that he himself was loved any the less, because other love was not repressed. Robert thought there never was such a good father as his. And now the buying was complete, and it was time to set out for Lal's Mountain. Mr. Murray and Robert were to live at the chalet, and the deaf-mute had put the little place in order, and was waiting to receive them. But the last exploit before leaving Philadelphia rendered Robert jubilant beyond

description; he laughed until he cried, he laughed until he lay back on the sofa, and made their rooms at the hotel ring with his glee. What was he laughing at? At Jerry. One of the wildest dreams of Robert's life became a reality. He sent for Jerry to come to the city, and he sent him back a new Jerry, whom scarcely any one recognized. He bought for Jerry a patent leg, with springs so artfully constructed that Jerry was more content than ever with his condition, only this "new leg needed a boot like a Christian," as Jerry put it. Also, Jerry got a glass eye, "a glass eye that looked just like a real eye, so that Jerry himself could hardly tell which was glass and which was real." When Jerry, with a booted patent leg, a glass eye, a new tweed suit, and a head for the first and last time manipulated by a city barber, appeared before Robert, Robert executed a war-dance, shouted and shrieked with fun, until his father remonstrated in favor of order; and then the boy rolled on the sofa and laughed until he stopped from sheer exhaustion.

"I never had such fun as in rebuilding Jerry," he declared. "When we went to supper no one stared at Jerry; he looked just like other people. No one would guess that we'd bought nearly half of him at a shop."

"Well, it's time," said Jerry, surveying himself in the cheval-glass. "I'm nearly as good as new. No one would think that me and whiskey had had such troubles. I've got the better of the work of that old black bottle now."

"You should have a coat of arms, Jerry," said Robert. "I will illuminate an original one for you, in red and gilt, if you like, and a little black and blue. I should suggest a bottle, *noir*, prostrate, a Temperance Badge, *d'or rampant*, a pledge, *gules volant*, a few other things, and the motto, 'Rejoice not over me, oh! mine enemy.'"

"Robert, Robert, I fear you are going out of your head again!" said his father.

"There's just one thing more I want," said Robert, "and that I can't have. I would like to see Bop and the twins when Jerry goes into the mill to-morrow morning."

Robert found that there had been another thing which he wanted. At least, he wanted it when it was offered to him,—and that was a horse. A pair of saddle-horses came round one morning to the hotel for Mr. Murray and Robert. They went to ride them in Fairmount Park.

"How do you like that horse?" asked Mr. Murray.

"He is splendid!" cried Robert.

"I'm glad you think so. He is yours. This one is mine. We are going to ride all the way from the city to the cottage at Lal's Mountain. How will you like that?"

"I couldn't like anything better."

"And I am negotiating for the purchase of an interest in a large lumber-yard, so that I shall have an opening for you. After another year in school, or two perhaps, you must go into the business and learn it thoroughly from the beginning. No half-way doings for me."

That was a beautiful journey to Lal's Mountain. The world was in all the glory, the sunny warmth, the delicious perfumed air of June. Each mile of the way the scenery seemed to grow lovelier and lovelier. Robert told his father tales of his journeys down the Schuylkill in the barge *Fair-Weather*. Mr. Murray did not now resent these tales. He saw that his son had had a safe and happy childhood, which had moulded him in upright and generous feelings.

They rode along the banks of the beautiful river, and Robert in his joy sang songs that Eliza had sung to her children as they drifted down-stream in the *Fair-Weather*.

"The water! the water!
The dear and blessed thing.

Which all day fed the little flowers
On its banks blossoming.

"The water! the water!
That murmured in my ear
Hymns of a saint-like purity
Which angels well might hear,
And whisper in the gate of heaven
How meek a pilgrim there was shriven."

Or again, when his father would say, "Sing, Robert," he would chant:

"Now to the rivulets from the mountains
Point the rods of the fortune-tellers,
Youth perpetual dwells in fountains,
Not in flasks and casks and cellars.
Then with the water fill the pitcher,
Wreathed about with classic fables,
Ne'er Falernian threw a richer
Light upon Lucullus' tables."

"That makes me think, Robert, I must buy for us a 'Longfellow pitcher.' As good temperance people, we must have one of those poetic jugs for the centre of our table."

"I wish," said Robert, "that some one would collect all, or as much as possible, of the pretty things the poets have said about temperance and water and put them into a little gift-book. North is great on Latin, and he gave us out some nice things one day from the Latin poets about water. But from what I heard the fellows

reading in the higher classes, I reckoned they said a deal more in praise of wine."

"That is true. But I think they would not have praised so freely if they had had wines as alcoholic as we have now, or if they had had rum, gin, and brandy with their horrible effects. It took a deal of the wine of the ancients to produce a drunkenness,—very mild and brief in comparison with the drunkenness that is the product of the alcoholic drinks of our day. People often forget how comparatively modern a thing distillation is. We should have had anti-liquor crusades hundreds of years ago, if the need had been as great as it has now grown to be."

Stopping as they chose, to rest and view the scenery, it was the third day when the ride ended by their reaching the mill. What a change was there. Beyond the mill, on the level, shaded by the big chestnut-tree, rose the new house. On the ridge of the roof sat Captain 'Zekiel, shingling away with all his might. On a scaffolding, at one corner, stood Bop, nailing on clap-boards, with the skill of an experienced carpenter. On the ground stood the reconstructed Jerry, also nailing on clap-boards. Up and down ran the youngest boy, carrying clap-boards to the workers. In the garden, near the

beehives, singing to the bees, sat Pink in a white apron, her knitting in her hands as usual. The youngest sister saw them coming, and down the road she dashed, waving her hands, her hair floating out on the breeze. Pink heard the note of joy, and dropped her knitting. Eliza hurried from the kitchen, where she was cooking supper. She came waving a meat-fork, just as when Robert had first seen her, but not now to order off Robert. She would as soon have thought of ordering off Pink or Bop or the twins, as her dear Robert. The cries of welcome echoed up to the new house, and Captain 'Zekiel scrambled from the roof, Bop came nearly headlong from the scaffolding, Jerry dropped his hammer, and the whole family clustered about Robert as bees about a new queen.

They all had supper in the mill-kitchen, and Eliza brought out her best preserves and the fruit-cake which she had kept in readiness. It was nine o'clock before Robert and the Superintendent set off for their cottage, where the deaf-mute was waiting for them, the rooms decked with flowers in festive array.

Then began a joyous summer. Robert helped work on the new house. He nailed on clapboards, and watched the hanging of doors, and he and Pink did nearly all the inside painting,

and under his direction, as he said "it was all the fashion," they stained and varnished a walnut border a foot wide around each floor "to go around the carpets."

"Only, you know, Robert, it will look rather funny before we get any carpets," said Pink.

"Until then," said Robert, gravely, "we will pretend that the white wood part is a matting." And they both laughed with delight at this conceit.

As to all that furniture which he had bought, Robert said never one word. He overheard the family planning where they should place their few small possessions in the new house, and he laughed in his sleeve.

At last the house was finished and cleaned. Then Robert announced that the next day would be his birthday, and they must all drop work, and spend it with him at the chalet.

"But, Robert, we meant to move to-morrow," said Eliza.

"Oh, put off moving for a day, can't you, mother? I shall take it very hard of you if you do not spend with me the first birthday I have ever kept."

"I knew that remark would fetch 'em," he said, in gleeful confidence to his father.

It fetched them. They all came up the

hill and spent the day, and had a very merry time.

During the day several loaded wagons stopped at the new house, and the Britt family went there in a very free and easy fashion. They set the new furniture in place, and brought in and distributed all the things from the living-rooms at the mill. Curtains were put at all the windows and carpets were laid.

When the Allens at nightfall came home, they went into the new house to take a look, and could hardly believe their eyes. It was furnished throughout. In the parlor was the organ, a music-rack, music, a little book-case, some books, pictures on the walls, a black sofa, and some cane-seat chairs around a nice table. Eliza's kitchen-ware was in the new kitchen. At the back door waited a hogshead of new crockery.

"It looked," said Captain 'Zekiel, "just as if some other people had moved in while they were gone and meant to live there."

"It looked," said Bop, "just as if they owned Aladdin's lamp. Was there anything else they could wish for?"

No. Bop did not think there was.

"They were so rich, they felt like kings and queens!"

They slept in the new house that night; that

is, they sat up and walked around and talked and looked, and Captain 'Zekiel rubbed his hands and said over and over again:

"Oh, what bad bargains I make; don't I, 'Liza? There was Jerry, and there was Robert. But Robert—I should have carried off to the poorhouse, shouldn't I, 'Liza? Oh, a Bad Bargain was Robert!"

"The Bargain you made about Robert was the very best bargain you ever made in your life, 'Zekiel."

"So it was," said Captain 'Zekiel, seriously. "If it had not been for that bargain I made about him, by now I should be in a drunkard's grave, and you and the children would be scattered 'most anywhere, having hard lines, all of you. I did not see my danger then. I felt that there was no danger, but now I see where I stood. I was loving the drink more and more each day, and was going down-hill just as fast as I could."

"Why, father," said the twin-boy, "you don't mean to say you could ever have been a drunkard, do you?"

"Yes, I do. Take warning! Any man may become a drunkard who begins to drink at all. True, he may not, but the chances are very heavily against him. There is one safe way—the way of total abstinence."

"Hold on there, Captain," cried Jerry, "even that is not always a safe way. I didn't find it so. I never drank a drop, but I lost a leg and an eye along of drink, though to look at me now you might not think it. I say there is only one safe way — the way of NATIONAL PROHIBITION!"

"Hurrah for National Prohibition!" cried Bop and his brother, and over the new Brussels carpet, out over the veranda, out upon the grass under the chestnut-tree they went, turning handsprings, until they looked like a pair of queer living wheels.

"Come right in and go to bed," said Eliza. "It is nearly two o'clock in the morning. The idea of you boys turning somersaults over a brand-new carpet!"

"It's the carpet and the house and all the other things which make us so happy," cried Bop, and he and his brother, followed by Jerry, marched up to bed to the tune of a song which they had just learned at the red school-house:

"One more river to cross!
The river of Prohibition!
One more river to cross!"

"They'll have the roof down with their noise," laughed Eliza.

"It is a strong roof, and the song is a good

song," said Captain 'Zekiel; "but, 'Liza, you and I are older, and the song we feel to sing is a different song, 'The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage,' and 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?'"

"And there is another, Ezekiel," said Eliza, laying her hand on his arm; "a song which belongs to you, for you always had a generous heart, doing good as you had opportunity,— 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days'; 'Blessed are they that sow beside all waters.'"

And, at last, silence and sleep fell over the new home.

All the neighborhood rejoiced in the improved fortunes of the Allens, and in the happiness and restored health of the Superintendent.

The history of Robert was a beautiful little romance let into the commonplaces of Lal's Mountain.

It seemed that now all things would prosper with Captain 'Zekiel. He found business improving. The summer hotel with its guests promised to be a source of revenue.

The first trip of the new *Fair-Weather* was an event. All the people from the tourists' camp went. For some days the boat was

crowded every trip. Men, women, and children,—all wanted to go to Lacy in the steam-barge. Also, it was chartered by the artists for longer excursions.

In the new, white house, which had been the ideal of her days, Mrs. 'Liza lost her careworn look and took a fresh lease of life. She woke in the morning, she slept at night, without being burdened with that terrible mortgage.

Captain Allen had now his laugh and his joke for everybody. He had always been cheery, now he was simply hilarious.

"There is one thing more I am thinking of, Mrs. Allen," said the Superintendent. "I want to send Pink to a good school for two or three years. Do you know our Robert was planning that? He thinks of everything, that boy! Yes, yes, it is altogether better that Pink should have advantages that she cannot get here. We will find her a school near Philadelphia. I have given you half of Robert, I think you must give me half of Pink."

"It seems only fair play," said Mrs. Allen with a laugh.

"I shall have a fine time next winter," said Mr. Murray. "Once a month, Robert, you will come home from Friday afternoon till Monday, and once a month Pink will come in the same

way. I shall give one of my rooms to Pink and call it by her name. But I shall not have you both home the same week, mind you. That would be a feast one week and a famine the next. I shall have my company by installments, so I will not be too lonesome."

"All right," laughed Robert and Pink.

"You'll let us come home together for Thanksgiving and Christmas, won't you?" said Robert.

"Oh, Pink must come here for Christmas," cried Eliza. "I cannot give up Pink for nine months together."

"Pink, Pink, why does every one think so much of you?" said Mr. Murray.

"Little, plain, red-headed girl. I'm surprised at it; aren't you, father?" whispered Robert saucily in his father's ear.

"Can't we go to the city?" screamed the twins.

"Bop shall come to the city in four years to go into my lumber-yard," said Robert importantly.

"Don't count on me to come," said Jerry. "I'd rather give up my new leg and my new eye than leave the Allen mill. Hush up, you noisy twins! You'll stop here with me and help run Lal's Mountain."

It was thus through "The Captain's Bargain"

that fairer fortunes came to all the Captain's family. "There is that giveth and yet increaseth."

And three or four years later, when Robert was a diligent young man of business in the city, his father said to him, one day, of some new venture:

"I made a deal of money by that, Robert. You will be a rich man. What will you do with your fortune?"

"Father," said Robert, "you remember how you used to pass the old mill and lean down from your horse, and hand me toys or boxes of candy and say, 'What will you do with them?' What did I use to say?"

"You used to say, 'Half for Pink,'" said his father.

"Well, I haven't changed my views yet," said Robert.

"All right," said his father; "only remember that we are all only stewards and lease-holders of God, and we should say of what we have, 'All for Heaven and for Humanity.'"

THE END.

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